



Two Bronze Tritons from Nicolaes Witsen's Collection

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ABSTRACT

It recently emerged that two bronze 'doorknobs' in the Rijksmuseum collection, decorated with Tritons blowing conch shells and with inlaid silver discs, came from the renowned collection of the Amsterdam merchant and burgomaster Nicolaes Witsen. They were listed in 1728 in the catalogue of the sale of his estate (in the *Antiquiteyten* section) and appear in an engraving in the third, enlarged edition of Witsen's *Noord en Oost Tartaryen* of 1785. It was also possible to establish that they were not, as had long been thought, sixteenth-century objects, but Roman appliques dating from the first century AD. The pair probably came from a litter used to carry the body of a deceased to its burial place. The two pieces were recently transferred to the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, where they have been reunited with other antiquities from Witsen's collection.

Since 1887 the Rijksmuseum had had two curious objects in its collection, whose significance has until now not been properly recognized.¹ They are a pair of bronze casings or hollow cylinders terminating at the front or on top in a male figure modelled effectively in wax (figs. 1-3). Each little figure is half-length, sprouting from a few leaves.² Both are nude, with carefully defined musculature. With all their might they blow long, spiral conch shells, and this tells us that they are Tritons, sea creatures from classical antiquity (fig. 5). On their heads are small 'wings', which can be interpreted as stylized fins or crustacean claws. Their faces are expressive, with sharply delineated eyes, bulging cheeks, prominent eyebrows and tangled hair. The two hollow cylinders flare slightly towards the bottom or back and end in a flat ring; a small hole in the shaft indicates that they were designed to

be mounted on something, possibly as the finial on a rod or staff (fig. 3). A pattern of two rows of interlinked (and seemingly engraved) discs runs around the centre of the cylinders. When the pieces were cleaned recently, the discs proved to be silver, which had been inlaid in the bronze and were so badly tarnished that they had become as dark as the patinated bronze (fig. 3).³ Broadly speaking, the two objects appear to be mirror images and were undoubtedly modelled as a pair by one and the same hand. Closer examination reveals minor differences; as well as his conch shell, the little man on the right (fig. 2), for instance, holds an 'unidentifiable object'. That, at least, is how it was described in the 1973 Rijksmuseum sculpture catalogue.⁴

Tartar Antiquities?

A chance discovery recently revealed that the two little bronzes had already



Fig. 1
Applique with a Triton, Roman, first century AD. Bronze, l. 10.5 cm. Formerly in Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BK-NM-8341; transferred to the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, 2016, inv. no. K 2016/4.1.



Fig. 2
Applique with a Triton, Roman, first century AD. Bronze, l. 10.5 cm. Formerly in Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BK-NM-8340; transferred to the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, 2016, inv. no. K 2016/4.2.



Fig. 3

There is a small hole in the shafts of both appliques, which are decorated with circular silver inlays (fig. 1 shown here).

been published long before they reached the Rijksmuseum. Placed one above the other, they appear in an engraving in the third, enlarged edition of Nicolaes Witsen's *Noord en Oost Tartaryen* of 1785 (fig. 4).⁵ The engraver painstakingly reproduced all the characteristics of the bronzes, including the positions of the heads of the two Tritons, their arms, hands, fingers and attributes. He even made sure to depict a detail like the rectangular notch at the top of the rim in the lower Triton. The print also shows clearly that both pieces had a small ring below the foliage on which each figure rests, which was evidently broken off subsequently. A remnant of one is still present below the piece on the right. The pair belonged to the author of the book, the Amsterdam burgomaster, 'wise merchant' and collector Nicolaes Witsen (1641-1717).⁶ His renowned cabinet of rarities and antiquities, kept in the art room and study in his house at number 440

Herengracht, was sold at auction on 30 March 1728 and the following days, and the bronze Tritons passed into other hands. In the sale catalogue they are listed under the *Anticque marmere beelden, urne, vlessen, &c.* (Antique marble figures, urns, vases etc.), in short as Roman or Greek antiquities, and simply described as *Een Metaal Beeldje, blazende op een Bazuyn* (A Metal Figure, blowing on a Trumpet) and *een dito, zynde een weerga* (another, being a match).⁷ Regrettably, the name of the buyer is unknown, nor do we know exactly how they eventually came to be in the Rijksmuseum. All that is certain about their provenance is that they were among a small group of sculptures in 's Rijks Museum van Schilderijen in Amsterdam that was transferred in 1887 to the *Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst* (which was part of the new Rijksmuseum). However, the possibility that the two little bronzes came from the

Fig. 4
Two Tritons, plate L
 from Nicolaes Witsen,
Noord en Oost
Tartaryen,
 third edition,
 Amsterdam 1785.
 Amsterdam,
 University Library,
 Special Collections,
 OTM KF 61 4013.



Fig. 5
Triton Holding a
Rudder and a Conch,
 Roman, second
 century AD.
 Mosaic, l. 120 cm.
 Museum of Cádiz,
 inv. no. CE24826.



eighteenth-century stadholders' holdings cannot be ruled out.⁸

Witsen's *Noord en Oost Tartarye*, originally published in 1692, was the result of his long-standing preoccupation with Russia – where he had been himself in 1664–65 as a member of a delegation to the court in Moscow – and his desire to find an overland route to China.⁹ A second, greatly expanded and updated edition of the book followed in 1705.¹⁰ Bound into the third edition of 1785 for the first time was a series of plates, identified with the letters A to T, of works from Witsen's own collection.¹¹ Among them, on plate L, is the print of the Tritons. It is at the very least remarkable that almost sixty years after the collection was split up, a series of illustrations was bound in, five of which, moreover, appear to have no direct connection with the book.¹²

A plausible explanation for this addition is that Witsen was in the process of preparing an illustrated catalogue of his own collection.¹³ The fact that there were also prints of Egyptian and Roman antiquities in the series is a strong pointer in this direction (fig. 13). Witsen was probably inspired by the publication in 1700 of Jacob de Wilde's *Signa Antiqua*, another Amsterdam collection of antiquities.¹⁴ The burgomaster had evidently already had engravings made of a number of his valuable objects, and had ordered them with a sequence of letters, presumably to reference accompanying texts. It never got that far. Witsen's heirs sold all his remaining printed books, prints and printing plates. In 1724, only seven years after his death, a batch of copies of *Noord en Oost Tartaryen*, with an estimated value of two thousand guilders, was with one Gideon Smit, while the printing plates for the prints and maps were kept elsewhere.¹⁵ This batch, or part of it, must eventually have ended up in the hands of Schalekamp, the publisher who reissued the book in 1785.

We may – cautiously – infer from the fact that Witsen had his bronze Tritons reproduced in an engraving that he regarded them as among the true curiosities in his collection. This is all the more surprising because they are not mentioned anywhere in the extensive correspondence – which has not, however, survived in its entirety – that he conducted with the Deventer burgomaster and antiquarian Gijsbert Cuper.¹⁶ This means, sadly, that it is also impossible to establish when he acquired these antiquities and – even more importantly – where they came from. Although it cannot be entirely ruled out that the Tritons have a Tartary provenance – in the correspondence with Cuper there is a reference to two 'roomsche Medalien' (Roman medals) that had come by sea from Archangelsk¹⁷ – it is not very likely.¹⁸ The fact that, according to the sale catalogue of his collection, Witsen was convinced that these were *Antiquiteyten* and not 'modern' sixteenth-century bronzes as some scholars later believed – the opposite mistake was, after all, often made in Witsen's time, by Jacob de Wilde, among others¹⁹ – suggests that he may have known that they came from an excavation. It is, though, very doubtful that he had any idea of what sort of objects they were, otherwise the entry in the sale catalogue of his holdings as 'metal figures' would have been more specific. He would not have been familiar, for instance, with the similar Roman bronze cylinder with a leaping bull that had been in the collection of the French king Louis XIV since at least 1684 (fig. 6).²⁰ To answer the question as to the original function of the Tritons, we have to go back in time – to antiquity.

Triton and Tritones

In Greek mythology Triton was the son of the sea god Poseidon and his wife Amphitrite.²¹ He lived in the sea, slept on a bed of sponges and was involved in many of his parents'



Fig. 6
Cylinder with a
Leaping Bull, Roman,
second century AD.
Bronze, l. 8,9 cm.
Paris, Musée du
Louvre,
inv. no. Br 942.
Photo: RMN /
H. Lewandowski.

doings. His realm was Lake Triton, which classical authors located in Libya. From here he helped his father in various adventures. He was credited with aiding the Argonauts by pulling their ship and guiding them when they were lost after capturing the Golden Fleece. In the epic battle between the Olympian gods and the chthonic giants (*Gigantomachia*) he terrified his opponents by producing fearful sounds on a huge conch.²² After the Battle of Actium, a naval engagement in which Octavian defeated his opponents, Antony and Cleopatra, Triton accompanied the victorious fleet with appropriate music.²³ In Greek and Roman art Triton is depicted as a fierce, bearded man, with the upper body of a human and the tail of a fish.²⁴ In this respect he belongs to the realm of half-human, half-animal creatures like the Centaurs, the Sirens and the Harpies.

In ancient literature the plural form of Triton – Tritones – appears for the first time in the Hellenistic period.²⁵ This corresponds with other contemporary multiplications of deities, such as the Eroles (Latin: *Cupidines*), the chubby beings derived from Aphrodite's

son, Eros. The Tritones, like the Eroles, did not have a mythology of their own, but are portrayed as attendants at festivities at sea, for example at the wedding of Poseidon and Amphitrite, and at more general marine revelries. Physically they resemble their ancestor, Triton. Classical authors like Moschus, Virgil, Pausanias, Lucian and Nonnus²⁶ mention them as having a bifurcated tail, gills under their ears, blue eyes, a human nose, animal's teeth and fingers like mussel shells.

They are usually depicted as younger than Triton, without beards, as in Witsen's Tritons. Their hair is in disarray, tangled with crustacean tails, claws and fins, and we find the same in the present bronzes. Their marine look is enhanced by large scales at the transition from the human belly to a fish-tail. Their appearance is ferocious and beast-like. As attributes they carry conch shells, tridents, marine animals and objects related to seafaring such as rudders and anchors (fig. 5). The 'unidentifiable object' that Witsen's right-hand triton holds is in fact a rudder. In Greek and Roman art, Tritons are often shown in the company of Poseidon, Amphitrite, Aphrodite and the Nereids. In mythology, they assisted Zeus with his abduction of Europa, performing a wedding hymn on their conches, and guided Leto to the island of Delos, where she could give birth to Artemis and Apollo.

The profiles of the two bronze Tritons are reminiscent of Julio-Claudian portraits, especially the depiction on coins of Caligula, with their long, pointed noses and heavy brows. This, taken in conjunction with the fine modelling, suggests a date in the first century AD.

Chariot Fittings?

The circular fittings of which the Tritons are an integral part indicate a function as appliques. As we have seen, the fittings can be secured to a pole by means of a hole through

which a pin could be inserted. In earlier publications, objects like these are described as chariot fittings, without any indications as to which part of the chariot they might fit.²⁷ It seems unlikely that they could have been hub-caps, since these are the most exposed parts of chariot wheels, designed to protect the rotating axle. The eccentric position of these caps generally leads to numerous scratches and dents acquired in collisions with other objects. These delicately modelled Tritons would never have survived a position at the ends of a chariot's axle. This solution also fails to explain the two small rings that were originally beneath the figures. Fortunately, there are comparable objects that point in a different direction and to a different purpose for these decorated appliques.

A Roman statuette, now in the British Museum, shows a chariot being drawn by (originally) two horses (fig. 7). The vehicle is connected to the horses' harnesses by a long pole, which ends in a sculpted eagle's head. This finial has a double function: it protects the top part of the pole and decorates the racing chariot with a fitting image of a bird of prey. Other finials feature busts of gods and men, fierce animals (eagles, rams, boars, bulls, horses)²⁸ and Tritons, blowing their conches as hard as they can; there is a finial in

Fig. 8
Chariot Fitting
with a Triton,
Roman, first
century AD.
Bronze,
h. 10.2 cm.
London,
The British Museum,
inv. no. GR 1896. 0518.8.



Fig. 7
Chariot Drawn
by Two Horses
(one missing),
Roman, first
century AD.
Bronze,
l. 25.4 cm.
London,
The British Museum,
inv. no. 1894,1030.1.



the British Museum that is very similar to the Witsen pair (fig. 8).²⁹ All these busts have a cylindrical or rectangular fitting, often with silver inlays (as in Nicolaes Witsen's pieces), which is pierced at the side to attach the decoration to the central pole of the chariot. Witsen's two Tritons could not have been used like this, however: they are obviously a pair and they appear to be in 'eye contact'. Two poles on one chariot is a technical impossibility. There has to be another explanation, and the real likelihood that these two bronzes are grave goods can point us in the right direction.

Chariots, Litters and Burial Practices

An essential part of a funeral in the ancient world was the transport of the body to the burial site outside the city. Many Roman grave reliefs depict a funeral carriage, drawn by horses or donkeys (fig. 9). The representation of the deceased in a chariot may symbolize the journey to the underworld, but can also be seen as an allegory of the *cursus vitae*, the passage through life.³⁰ The many carriages on funerary monuments found around Trier are also there to remind viewers of good fortune on earth and the commercial successes of the tomb's occupant.³¹ From the eighth century BC onwards, the Celts in central Europe buried their elite warriors with their chariot, sometimes even with the horses.³²

In simpler burials, parts of a chariot were placed in the grave to symbolize



Fig. 9
Relief of a Funeral
Carriage, Roman,
first century AD.
Stone, l. 30 cm.
Leiden, National
Museum of
Antiquities,
inv. no. LKA 987.

the deceased's final journey to the underworld. Burial mounds throughout Europe contain parts of horses' harnesses, such as bits and bridles, and chariot fittings. This Celtic practice continued in Roman times, and bronze chariot fittings are found in burials from the Roman period, for example in Belgium.³³

Litters were also used to transport the deceased's body.³⁴ In Plutarch's *Life of Sulla*, for instance, we read that the burial of this Roman general was staged on a grand scale. His body lay on a golden litter; gold wreaths and axes symbolized the offices Sulla had held in life.³⁵ Litters like this had two poles that acted as connecting and supporting elements for the structure and as carrying poles for the porters. Illustrations of Roman litters clearly show that the foremost ends of the poles were decorated with metal

bosses, sometimes with a figurative finial (fig. 10). The fact that Nicolaes Witsen's Tritons are identical in size and, given the way they maintain eye contact, are undoubtedly a pair supports the suggestion that they were once part of an ornately decorated litter.³⁶ The rings on the underside, now lost, were probably used to attach drapes or other temporary trappings. The Tritons (like the bronze decorations on carriages) may have been interred in a grave as a symbol of the deceased's last journey. At some time they must have been unearthed, thus beginning a second existence as attractive objects for the art market, which eventually brought them to the great collector Nicolaes Witsen.

Epilogue: Other Antiquities from Witsen's Collection

The most important collection of classical antiquities in the seventeenth-century Netherlands was beyond doubt that of the brothers Jan and Gerard Reynst, who displayed it in their home at 209 Keizersgracht in Amsterdam.³⁷ There were around two hundred Italian paintings and more than three hundred classical sculptures in this collection, which was bought in Venice in 1629. It was Jan Reynst (1601-1646) who took the initiative of creating it.

Fig. 10
Relief of a Funeral
Procession with a
Litter, Amiternum,
first century AD.
Stone, l. 162 cm.
L'Aquila, Museo
Nazionale d'Abruzzo.
Photo: © 2017
DeAgostini Picture
Library/Scala,
Florence.



Fig. 11
Funerary Relief
of Stratokleides
Flanked by Two
Servants, Smyrna,
second century BC.
Stone, h. 123 cm.
Leiden, National
Museum of
Antiquities,
inv. no. Pb 27.



He represented the family's trading firm in Venice, where he saw the way his Italian counterparts lived in their *palazzi* with collections of paintings, glass and classical sculptures. In 1629, he bought parts of the inventory of the Palazzo Vendramin on the Grand Canal and had the paintings and sculptures shipped to Amsterdam. Shortly before his death, Gerard Reynst (1599-1658) commissioned two cata-

logues of the collection: the paintings were published between 1665 and 1670 by Clement de Jonghe under the title *Caelaturae*, and Nicolaes Visscher published a selection of the classical sculptures around 1670 as the *Signorum Veterum Icones*. The collection was not kept in the family after Reynst's death in 1658: the first sale took place in 1660, when the Dutch Republic decided to improve relations with King Charles II of England by presenting him with works of art, a yacht and furniture. This 'Dutch Gift' included twenty-four paintings and twelve sculptures from the Reynst collection. In 1670 the remainder of the Reynst collection was sold. Some pieces were acquired by well-known collectors such as Gerrit Uylenburgh, Jan Six and Nicolaes Witsen.³⁸

Witsen bought ten marbles from Reynst's collection, which are now held in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. Two of them, a late-Hellenistic grave relief from Smyrna and an early Roman portrait head, are of considerable quality. The funerary relief depicts a small temple (*aedicula*) with two pilasters and a frieze with seven triglyphs and six metopes (fig. 11).³⁹ The inscription identifies the deceased as one Stratokleides, the son of Stratokleides. A second inscription within a laurel wreath reads *ho dêmos* (the people) indicating that the city (of Smyrna?) officially honoured the deceased. An elderly man clad in a short shirt (*chiton*) and a larger cloak (*himation*) is depicted in the *aedicula*. On his left is a *cornucopia* on a high pedestal. The man is flanked by two servants – miniaturized as was usual on stelae of this period.

The Roman portrait head shows a stern, military looking Roman with a frown on his face (fig. 12).⁴⁰ His severe looks are emphasized by the protruding chin and his tight lips. In the eighteenth century the head was identified as Germanicus, but it is

clear from comparison with existing portraits of the Emperor Augustus's popular nephew that this suggestion does not hold water.

The rest of the Witsen marbles are considered less important works of art today: two fragmented Eastern Greek funerary reliefs, one of a sitting man accompanied by his servants and one of a standing man with two servants, leaning on a herm (fig. 13).⁴¹ There are also two small funerary reliefs from Asia Minor,⁴² a head of a Dacian warrior,⁴³ a small head of a bearded man (Hercules or a philosopher?),⁴⁴ a small head of a man wearing a laurel wreath (possibly Apollo)⁴⁵ and a female head, probably representing Diana.⁴⁶ All the inventory numbers of the ten pieces start with the letters Pb, which indicates that these pieces from the Witsen collection were later acquired by the Amsterdam collector Gerard van Papenbroek (1673-1743).

Van Papenbroek bequeathed his manuscripts and antiquities to the University of Leiden, where they arrived in 1744.⁴⁷ This was the starting point for an archaeological collection in Leiden, which was to become the National Museum of Antiquities in 1818 with the appointment of Professor Caspar Reuvenus as its



Fig. 13
Two Marble Reliefs from Classical Antiquity: a Sitting Man Accompanied by his Servants, and a Standing Man with two Servants, plate G from Nicolaes Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartaryen*, third edition, Amsterdam 1785. Amsterdam, University Library, Special Collections, OTM KF 61 4013.

first director.⁴⁸ It was Reuvenus who singled out the Papenbroek pieces by giving them the inventory numbers starting with 'Pb' and who indicated their earlier provenances in the inventory book of 1818.⁴⁹ The recent transfer of the two Tritons from Amsterdam to Leiden means that the Witsen collection of antiquities has gained two important pieces that have been overlooked for too long.⁵⁰



Fig. 12
Head of a Man, first century AD. Stone, h. 40.5 cm. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities, inv. no. Pb 137.

NOTES

- 1 The two objects have been on loan to the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden since 2016. The publication of this article marks the Rijksmuseum's permanent transfer of ownership of both pieces.
- 2 For similar leaf figures see Hans Jucker, *Das Bildnis im Blätterkelch. Geschichte und Bedeutung einer römischen Porträtform*, Olten 1961. With thanks to the anonymous peer reviewer of this article.
- 3 Conservation by Arie Pappot in 2015.
- 4 Jaap Leeuwenberg, coll. cat. *Beeldhouwkunst in het Rijksmuseum*, The Hague/Amsterdam 1973, no. 670. Leeuwenberg described the two little figures as Italian and dated them to the second half of the sixteenth century. Here he followed the catalogue compiled by Adriaan Pit in 1904 and its enlarged reprint in 1915; [A. Pit], *Catalogus van de beeldhouwwerken in het Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst te Amsterdam*, Amsterdam 1904, no. 166. Leeuwenberg also adopted his description of the pieces as doorknobs; however, no comparable items that support this identification are known.
- 5 *Noord en oost Tartaryen: behelzende eene beschryving van verscheidene Tartersche en Nabuurige gewesten, in de Noorder en oostelykste deelen van Aziën en Europa. Zedert naauwkeurig onderzoek van veele Jaaren, en eigen ondervinding ontworpen, beschreven, geteekent, en in 't licht gegeven door Mr. Nicolaas Witsen, Burgemeester te Amsterdam, &c., &c., &c., Tweede druk, Nieuwe Uitgaaf, Verrykt met eene Inleiding tot het werk, en met eene meenigte Afbeeldingen versierd. Te Amsterdam, by M. Schalekamp XDCCCLXXXV*, pl. L. Strangely, this third edition of 1785 was announced as the second edition. The title of the first edition of this work was *Noord en Oost Tartarye* (without an 'n').
- 6 For Witsen see Marion Peters, *De wijze koopman. Het wereldwijde onderzoek van Nicolaas Witsen (1641-1717), burgemeester en VOC-bewindhebber van Amsterdam*, Amsterdam 2010; Peter Rietbergen, 'Witsen's World: Nicolaas Witsen (1641-1717) between the Dutch East-India Company and the Republic of Letters', in Leonard Blussé et al. (eds.), *All in One Company: The VOC in Biographical Perspective*, Utrecht 1986, pp. 121-34; Willemijn van Noord and Thijs Weststeijn, 'The Global Trajectory of Nicolaas Witsen's Chinese Mirror', *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 63 (2015), no. 4, pp. 324-61.
- 7 *Catalogus van GOUDE en ZILVERE MODERNE MEDAILLES, VEELE PERSIAANSCH, MOGOLSCH, JAPANSCH vreemde MUNTEN en CIERADEN. ANTICQUE BEELDEN, URNEN, BASRELIEVEN en andere ANTIQUITEYTEN. Benevens eenige Oude fraaije MANUSCRIPTEN. Uit het Kabinet van den Wel-Edele Heer Mr. NICOLAAS WITZEN, In zyn Wel. Ed. Leeven Burgermeester en Raad der Stad Amsterdam, etc., etc.* (Amsterdam, 30 March 1728 and following days, by Dirk van Hage, Vincent Posthumus, Pieter Kerkhoven and Jan Lempjes), p. 14, nos. 22, 23. Copy consulted: The Hague, RKD-Netherlands Institute for Art History, microfilm no. 0368 (2).
- 8 Leeuwenberg 1973 (note 4), no. 670. A stadholders provenance is suggested by the inventory numbers (BK-NM-8340, 8341), which follow on directly from a work that was certainly in the stadholders' collection, Bardou's bronze of Frederick the Great on horseback (BK-NM-8339); see Leeuwenberg 1973, no. 850.
- 9 Peters 2010 (note 6), pp. 99-149. Later editions of this work were titled *Noord en Oost Tartaryen* (with an 'n' at the end), and this is the spelling used here.
- 10 On the different editions see *ibid.*, pp. 185-217.
- 11 *Ibid.*, illustrations on pp. 364, 372, 373, 393, 403, 436.
- 12 On these five prints see *ibid.*, pp. 371-72, and illustrations on pp. 354 (pl. B), 373 (pl. I), 393 (pl. G), 436 (pl. L).
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 371-76.
- 14 *Signa Antiqua e Museo Jacobi de Wilde veterum poetarum carminibus illustrata et per Mariam Filiam aeri inscripta*, Amsterdam 1700. De Wilde proudly had himself portrayed in his cabinet with a distinguished guest, Czar Peter the Great, whom Witsen often showed around when he was staying in Holland (1697-98). See also Peters 2010 (note 6), pp. 126, 374, 375.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 195-99, 433.
- 16 J.F. Gebhard, *Het leven van Mr. Nicolaas Cornelisz. Witsen (1641-1717)*, Utrecht 1882, vol. 2, with the transcribed letters from Witsen to Cuper; Peters 2010 (note 6), pp. 271-301. The bronzes are not mentioned in Cuper's account of a visit to Witsen's cabinet in 1711 either; see The Hague,

- National Library of the Netherlands (Koninklijke Bibliotheek), shelf no. 72c31, fols. 120-65. With thanks to Jetze Tauber for his tireless help in checking the letters and for showing us his transcription and notes of Cuper's account of 1711.
- 17 Gebhard 1882 (note 16), p. 427 (letter dated 10 January 1715).
 - 18 Such objects are known primarily from Western European excavations and collections; see note 28 below.
 - 19 De Wilde owned a number of sixteenth-century Italian bronzes that he regarded as antiquities from the ancient world; see *Signa Antiqua* (note 14), pls. XIV, XV, XVI, XVII, XXIV, XXXI, XXXVII, XXXIX, XLIV, XLVI, XLVII and possibly L.
 - 20 Sophie Baratte, *Les Bronzes de la Couronne*, exh. cat. Paris (Musée du Louvre) 1999, no. 156 (as 'avant-train de taureau'). For a similar leaping bull, with inlaid silver eyes, see Comte de Caylus, *Recueil d'Antiquités Égyptiennes, Étrusques, Grecques, Romaines et Gauloises*, vol. 1, Paris 1752, p. 174 and pl. LXIV (no. 11).
 - 21 See Hesiod, *Theogony*, 30-33.
 - 22 Hyginus, *De Astronomia*, pp. 2, 23.
 - 23 Propertius, pp. 4, 6, 61-62.
 - 24 See the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC), vol. VIII, part 1, pp. 68-73.
 - 25 In the bucolic poems by Moschus (second century BC), book 2 (Europa), 122-24.
 - 26 See LIMC (note 24), vol. VIII, part 1, p. 73.
 - 27 See among others Heinz Menzel, *Die römischen Bronzen aus Deutschland, Band 11: Trier, Mainz am Rhein 1966*, pp. 111-12, nos. 272-73, Taf. 83: 'Diese mit Tüllen versehenen Büsten werden wohl auf rechteckige oder runde Balken aufgesetzt worden sein, wobei ihre eigentliche Verwendung nicht gesichert ist.'
 - 28 For example Menzel 1966 (note 27), pp. 109-10, nos. 266-68, Taf. 81; pp. 111-12, nos. 272-73, Taf. 83. Heinz Menzel, *Die römischen Bronzen aus Deutschland, Band 111: Bonn, Mainz am Rhein 1986*, p. 169, no. 470, Taf. 142-43; p. 170, no. 472, Taf. 143. There is an asymmetrical bust of Diana on a cylinder (perhaps originally with an Apollo as a pendant) in the Archaeological Museum in Seville; thanks to Jan de Hond.
 - 29 London, The British Museum, inv. no. GR 1896.5-418.8.
 - 30 Winfried Weber, *Die Darstellungen einer Wagenfahrt auf römischen Sarkophagdeckeln und Loculusplatten des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (*Archaeologica* series, no. 5), Rome 1978.
 - 31 Claire Massart, *Les tumulus Gallo-Romains de Hesbaye (Cité des Tongres) – La représentation funéraire des élites*, Tongeren 2015 (*Atuatuca* series, no. 6), p. 151.
 - 32 John Dent, 'Three Cart Burials from Wetwang', in Gillian Carr and Simon Stoddart (eds.), *Celts from Antiquity*, Cambridge 2002, p. 248.
 - 33 See Massart 2015 (note 31), pp. 149-51.
 - 34 See Jocelyn Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, London 1996, p. 55.
 - 35 Plutarch, *Life of Sulla*, chapters 33-38.
 - 36 The iconographic connection between the sea creatures and a funerary ritual is not clear, however.
 - 37 See Anne-Marie Logan, *The 'Cabinet' of the Brothers Gerard and Jan Reynst*, Amsterdam/New York 1979; Ruurd Halbertsma, *Scholars, Travellers and Trade: The Pioneer Years of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leyden, 1818-1840*, London/New York 2003, pp. 6-10.
 - 38 For the dispersal of Reynst's collection see Frédéric Bastet and Hendrik Brunsting, *Corpus Signorum Antiquorum Musei Antiquarii Lugduno-Batavi – Catalogus van het klassieke beeldhouwwerk in het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden*, Zutphen 1982, pp. IX-XVIII.
 - 39 Inv. no. Pb 27. *Ibid.*, p. 75, pl. 40, no. 146.
 - 40 Inv. no. Pb 137. *Ibid.*, p. 209, pl. 114, no. 385.
 - 41 Inv. nos. Pb 75, Pb 77. *Ibid.*, p. 81, pl. 42, no. 156; p. 89, pl. 167, no. 167. Probably these are the two bas-reliefs of a standing and one of a sitting figure with a child mentioned under the heading 'Ancient marble statues' in the sale catalogue of Witsen's collection of rarities. The collector had engravings made of both reliefs, which suggests that he attached considerable value to them.
 - 42 Inv. nos. Pb 4, Pb 13. *Ibid.*, p. 93, pl. 47, no. 173; p. 95, pl. 48, no. 176.
 - 43 Inv. no. Pb 124. *Ibid.*, p. 212, pl. 117, no. 392.
 - 44 Inv. no. Pb 127. *Ibid.*, p. 219, pl. 120, no. 407.
 - 45 Inv. no. Pb 133. *Ibid.*, pp. 224-25, pl. 124, no. 421.
 - 46 Inv. no. Pb 104. *Ibid.*, p. 245, pl. 136, no. 465.
 - 47 Halbertsma 2003 (note 37), pp. 14-20.
 - 48 *Ibid.*, pp. 21-30.
 - 49 Leiden, Archives National Museum of Antiquities, Inventory 1818-1825, inv. no. 1.1/1.
 - 50 Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities, inv. nos. K 2016/4.1-2 (Rijksmuseum inv. nos. BK-NM-8341, 8340, respectively).