

Digging for Antiquities with Diplomats:

GISBERT CUPER (1644–1716) AND HIS SOCIAL CAPITAL

Bianca Chen

European University Institute

GISBERT CUPER'S CAREER AND HIS RISE TO FAME allow us to examine the working practices of the Republic of Letters and reconsider how to judge a scholar's merits in a historical context other than our own. First appointed professor of history and rhetoric at a provincial Athenaeum in Deventer (1668), Cuper subsequently became Rector of the institute (1672), *burgomaster* (mayor) of the city (1674), a delegate of the city to the meetings of the provincial States (the States of Overijssel), a delegate of the province to the States General of the Dutch Republic (1681–1694) and finally, for that highest governing body, a commissioner in the field during the War of the Spanish Succession (1706). Cuper's entrance into the States General marked a crucial transition in his life, both professionally and personally. He had to move to The Hague, which meant that he could not continue his work at the Athenaeum in Deventer. With this move he lost his academic position in the learned community and thus the official capacity to educate, supervise, and sponsor the next generation of scholars. Moreover his political work would leave him less time to spend on his studies. Although his rise in politics meant the loss of his local position, nevertheless in the end it had positive consequences not only for the pursuit of his studies, but also for his reputation in the Republic of Letters.

This article will examine how the concurrence of politics and letters was important for the advancement of scholarship and how it led to the perception of Cuper as a particularly significant cultural intermediary in the Republic of Letters. I will refer to the concept of social capital to emphasize the importance of networks of patronage and the exchange of services within any community, including within the Republic of Letters. Explicitly stressing the value of correspondence to the Republic of Letters in general and to Cuper in particular, I will pay special attention to his large and diverse network of correspondents from different backgrounds. Ultimately this



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article seeks to demonstrate how successfully Cuper bridged the world of politics and letters by employing his social capital for the sake of learning and the subsequent benefits for his reputation in the Republic of Letters.

EARLY MODERN POLITICIANS AND SCHOLARS: NETWORKS AND PATRONAGE

As a politician, Cuper knew very well where power was located, how it was distributed within the Dutch Republic and abroad, and how it might be brought to equilibrium. To obtain stature and have a career in politics, one needed to have family and friends at strategic places to promote one's ambitions.¹ Ties of patronage were usually maintained between persons of unequal wealth, power, and reputation, but since such relationships always provided reciprocal favors, they could also exist between social equals.² Patronage was thus not only pivotal in the process of state-building in the early modern period, but also omnipresent in the contemporary arts and sciences.³ That patronage exists only in relationships that are at least potentially profitable for both actors is implied in Bourdieu's definition of social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition."⁴

Cuper's entrance into the political domain, as *burgomaster* of Deventer, was therefore the result not only of the talents and qualities he had exhibited as the Rector of an educational institution, but also of his marriage into one of the most powerful families in the city, the Van Suchtelen family, and also—and equally importantly—of his support for Stadtholder William III, who was the most significant political actor in the province of Overijssel.⁵ Allegedly, Cuper's political patron was the Utrechter Everard van Weede van Dijkveld, usually referred to as Dijkveld (1626–1702),⁶ who held a range of high diplomatic posts for the Dutch Republic in France, England, and the Southern Netherlands.⁷ Although Cuper indicated that his correspon-

¹ On patronage in early modern Europe, but mainly focused on the Dutch Republic, see Geert H. Janssen, *Creaturen Van De Macht: Patronage Bij Willem Frederik Van Nassau* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005); Janssen, "Political Brokerage in the Dutch Republic: The Patronage Networks of William Fredrick of Nassau-Dietz (1613–1664)," in *Your Humble Servant: Agents in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Hans Cools, Marika Keblusek, and Badeloch Noldus (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2006); Luuc Kooijmans, *Vriendschap En De Kunst Van Het Overleven in De Zeventiende En Achttiende Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 1997); Marion Peters, "Nepotisme, Patronage En Boekopdrachten Bij Nicolaes Witsen (1641–1717), Burgemeester Van Amsterdam," *LIAS* 25, no. 1 (1998): 83–134; Judith Pollmann, "Dienst En Wederdienst: Patronage En De Kunst Van Het Netwerken in Het Ancien Régime," in *Veelvormige Dynamiek: Europa in Het Ancien Régime, 1450–1800*, ed. Willem Frijhoff and Leo Wessels (Amsterdam: SUN, 2006).

² For an account of the vast array of definitions of patronage and the disagreements among both historians and social scientists, see Pollmann, "Dienst En Wederdienst," 214–18.

³ *Ibid.*, 216, 218–19; Saskia Stegeman, *Patronage and Services in the Republic of Letters: The Network of Theodorus Janssonius Van Almeloveen (1657–1712)* (Amsterdam: APA - Holland University Press, 2005), esp. 180.

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 248.

⁵ A. J. Veenendaal, *Het Dagboek Van Gisbert Cuper, Gedeputeerde Te Velde. Gehouden in De Zuidelijke Nederlanden in 1706* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950), vii-x.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁷ Mr. O. Schutte, *Repertorium Der Nederlandse Vertegenwoordigers, Residerende in Het Buitenland 1584–1810* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976), 23–25.

dence with Van Weede mainly touched upon political matters,⁸ he could not resist the temptation to write letters in which he used his erudition to flatter the diplomat:

Considering that I had the honor to converse with you on the subject of Ambassadors, I am compelled to put into writing what was the practice among the Ancients in their reception, and to examine whether, in centuries long since past, they observed the difference we maintain today between Ambassadors of Kings or Crowned Heads, and those that were sent by peoples or Republics. Right now I am in the mood to fulfill my promises, and I dare to imagine that at a certain moment I will shed some light on [that] about which almost no one has spoken, and that one does not find developed in ancient history; but [about which] one could find, here and there, to the left and to the right, little traces that can be put to use. I will start with the city of Rome, to which many peoples have paid homage, and I will add what I find among other nations. I will reckon myself very happy, however, if this letter would merit your approval: which will be worth more to me than the opinions of a hundred others, since you are so enlightened, and you have so worthily and with much glory and splendor fulfilled all the characteristics one wishes for in a perfect Ambassador.⁹

This short excerpt clearly shows how Cuper managed to connect knowledge and power. Van Weede was his political senior, and Cuper chose to flatter him not by summing up the characteristics of the perfect ambassador he was, but by presenting him with an account of the ancient history of ambassadorship. Knowledge of ancient history could apparently be brought to the service of political alliances.¹⁰

The practice of presenting knowledge to a benefactor in exchange for protection, career advancement, or money was widespread and found its ultimate expression in book dedications. The number of books dedicated to Cuper has not yet been investigated, but they were undoubtedly more than the three currently documented dedications.¹¹ Theodorus Janssonius van

⁸ National Archive (NA), The Hague, 1.10.24, inv. no. 7. On the back of the cover of the volume Cuper wrote: "Brieven van de heer van Dycvelt aen de heer Gisb. Cuper waer in gehandelt wert van veele politycke saaken," translated: "Letters of Mr. van Dycvelt to Mr. Gisb. Cuper, in which are treated many political affairs."

⁹ Cuper to Dijkvelt, n.d. [1688?], NA 1.10.24, inv. no. 1: "CUPERI AD R. ANGL. EPISC. MONAST. ET ALIOS PRAEC. DIGN. VIROS EPIST. CUM VARIOR. RESPON." 131–32: "Quant j'avois l'honneur de me entretenir avec vous sur le sujet des Ambassadeurs, je me suis obligé de mettre par escrit, ce que fut pratique parmy les Anciens dans leur reception, et d'examiner si l'on observoit dans les siecles passés il y a long temps, la difference, comme l'on fait aujourd'hui entre les Ambassadeurs des Roys ou des Testes Couronnées, et entre ceux, qui estoient envoyez par des peuples ou par des Republicques. Je suis a cette heure d'un humeur de m'aquiter [sic] de mes promesses, et je m'ose imaginer, que je donneray quelque lumiere a un point, dont personne n'a presque parlé, et qui ne se trouve pas developpé dans l'histoire ancienne; si non qu'on rencontre par ça et par la, a droit et a gauche quelques petites traces, de ce que fut mis en usage. Je commenceray par la ville de Rome, a qui tant des peuples ont fait hommage, et j'y adjouteray ce qui se trouve parmi les autres nations. Je me estimeray bien heureux cependant, si cette lettre pourroit meriter vostre approbation: elle me vaudra autant que celle de cent autres, puisque vous estes si éclairé, et que vous avez si dignement et avec tant de gloire et d'eclat remply toutes les caracteres, qu'on desire en un parfait [sic] Ambassadeur."

¹⁰ History and politics went hand in hand in many instances; see J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957). For an example of an early seventeenth-century English antiquarian-politician, see Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton, 1586–1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). For the French case, linked to the (early) Enlightenment, see Jacob Soll, *Publishing The Prince: History, Reading, and the Birth of Political Criticism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005). On how Colbert helped promote the absolutist claims of Louis XIV by exploiting ecclesiastical scholarship, Soll recently published "The Antiquary and the Information State: Colbert's Archives, Secret Histories and the Affair of the Régale, 1663–1682," *French Historical Studies* 31, no. 1 (2008): 3–28.

¹¹ One by Johannes Gezelius (1615–1690), who posthumously published a commentary of Johannes Columbus on Lactantius' *De mortibus persecutorum* (1684), a project Cuper had actively supplied with material; one by Theodorus Janssonius van Almeloveen (1657–1712), a medical doctor with great interest for philology and antiquarianism, who

Almeloveen, for example, dedicated to Cuper his *Conjectanea*, a part of *Opuscula sive antiquitatum e sacris, profanorum specimen* (1686), a compilation of commentaries on inscriptions and ancient artifacts, as well as philological questions. By means of this dedication, Van Almeloveen could begin a correspondence with Cuper and become one of the participants in his large scholarly network.¹²

In the case of book dedications to Cuper, we can distinguish two different aims that are difficult to separate, if indeed they are separable at all. Because Cuper was simultaneously a politician and a scholar, he could lend an aspiring scholar power *and* knowledge, or even better, reward his protégé with entry into his network of trans-European scholars. After they became acquainted, Van Almeloveen did certainly profit from Cuper's network, as the two men engaged in a regular correspondence and cooperated on projects of shared interest. Moreover, Van Almeloveen may have counted on Cuper's political connections, especially when he was searching for appointments to universities. In these cases, Cuper's recommendation could make a considerable difference. For example, on another occasion Johannes Heyman, a minister of religion in Smyrna, won Cuper's favor, which resulted in his appointment as professor of Oriental Languages at Leiden University. However, he had done so not by dedicating a book to Cuper, but rather by keeping him informed of his progressive training in different Oriental languages and providing him with exclusive and elaborate reports of his travels in the Orient.¹³

Knowledge and power were thus interrelated on a practical level and in myriad ways for a man like Cuper. Before we turn to these practices and examine one case of such interrelations, it should be noted that scholarly discoveries and their results, as well as power relations, had to be disseminated and negotiated over long distances. It is no coincidence that the brief history of ambassadorship is taken from a letter from Cuper, who at that time resided mainly in The Hague, the political capital of the Dutch Republic, to Van Weede, his senior and patron who traveled to and from The Hague en route for his many diplomatic missions. Contacts through correspondence were vital to the maintenance of valuable relations—not only for those seeking political or economic gain, but also for those who were seeking intellectual fulfillment. Cuper managed to establish an epistolary network that served both his political and his scholarly needs, and by exploiting the intersections between politics and scholarship, he strengthened his position in the Republic of Letters.

became professor of Greek, history, and rhetoric, and some years later of medicine as well at the *Athenaeum Illustre* in Harderwijk; and one, *Orbis Romanus, Seu Ad Constitutionem Antonini Imperatoris, de qua Ulpianus Leg. XVII. Digestis de Statu Hominum, Exercitationes Duae* (Leiden, 1699), by Ezechiel Spanheim (1629–1710), numismatist and diplomat.

¹² Stegeman, *Patronage and Services*, 55; Saskia Stegeman, "How to Set Up a Scholarly Correspondence: Theodorus Janssonius Van Almeloveen (1657–1712) Aspires to Membership of the Republic of Letters," *LIAS* 20, no.2 (1993): 234; "De Moralitate Ac Utilitate Dedicacionum: Dedications to and by Theodorus Janssonius Van Almeloveen (1657–1712)," *LIAS* 22, no. 2 (1995): 175–95. The latter article offers an interesting survey of the practice of book dedications in the seventeenth century, with a focus on the Dutch Republic.

¹³ A. H. Huussen and C. Wes-Patoir, "Hoe Een Ambitieuze Predikant Te Smirna Professor Te Leiden Werd. Brieven Van Johannes Heyman En Gisbert Cuper, 1699–1710," *Holland* 31 (1999): 87–100.

COMMUNICATION AS RAISON D'ÊTRE: SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS

The importance of communication, particularly correspondence, for the early modern learned community has been more than adequately dealt with in recent historiography.¹⁴ What matters is not so much that every scholar communicated, or had to communicate, but how they communicated, with whom, and with what result. Because its members were dispersed over a large geographical area, epistolary exchange was the most vital means of communication in the learned community. Without letters, and the accompanying reciprocal exchange of objects, drawings, books, and other gifts there would be little to hold such an extensive, geographically separated community together.¹⁵

A person's network of communication, especially when held together by relations of patronage and the exchange of services and gifts, can be regarded as social capital, complexly conceptualized as "the network of associations, activities, or relations that bind people together as a community via certain norms and psychological capacities, notably trust, which are essential for civil society and productive of future collective action or goods, in the manner of other forms of capital."¹⁶ This implies that in addition to looking at a scholarly network of correspondence in terms of volume, geographical dispersion, and intensity, we should also consider the ways in which one's social capital, generated within one's network, produced other forms of capital: economic, cultural or symbolic.¹⁷ On the one hand, as will be discussed below, by extending their personal network of correspondence outside the strict realm of learning, scholars could exploit new re-

¹⁴ Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, Hans Bots, and Jens Häselser, eds., *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la république des lettres: études des réseaux de correspondances du XVIIe aux XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005); Francisco Bethencourt and Florike van Egmond, eds., *Communication and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400–1700*, vol. 3, *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Hans Bots and Françoise Waquet, eds., *Commercium litterarium: la communication dans la république des lettres* (Amsterdam: APA – Holland University Press, 1994) and *La république des lettres* (Paris: Belin - De Boeck, 1997); J. Burkhardt and C. Werkstetter, eds., *Kommunikation Und Medien in Der Frühen Neuzeit* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005); P. Dibon, "Communication in the Respublica Litteraria of the Seventeenth Century," *Res Publica Litterarum: Studies in the Classical Tradition* 1 (1987): 43–55; Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Steven J. Harris, "Confession-Building, Long-Distance Networks, and the Organization of Jesuit Science," *Early Science and Medicine* 1, no. 3 (1996): 287–318; "Networks of Travel, Correspondence, and Exchange," in *The Cambridge History of Science*, ed. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); S. Kusukawa and I. Maclean, eds., *Transmitting Knowledge: Words, Images, and Instruments in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Martin Mulsow, *Die Unanständige Gelehrtenrepublik: Wissen, Libertinage und Kommunikation in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007); Stegeman, *Patronage and Services*, 169–71; Maarten Ultee, "The Republic of Letters: Learned Correspondence, 1680–1720," *Seventeenth Century* 2, no. 1 (1987): 95–112.

¹⁵ On the practice of gift exchange, see Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England*, ed. Margot C. Finn, Colin Jones, and Keith Wrightson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Kooijmans, *Vriendschap En De Kunst Van Het Overleven*; Irma Thoen, *Strategic Affection? Gift Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Holland* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

¹⁶ James Farr, "Social Capital: A Conceptual History," *Political Theory* 32, no. 1 (2004): 6–33. By taking a broader look at social capital and the historical roots of the concept, Farr tries to bring some clarity into the abundance of meanings bestowed on this influential concept in present-day sociology. By focusing on social capital producing other forms of capital, Farr deviates from Bourdieu who, while acknowledging that the forms of capital all influence and reproduce one another, regarded economic capital more prominently as the source for other forms of capital.

¹⁷ For a clear outline of economic, social, and cultural capital, respectively denoting one's wealth, resources within a network of relations, and aggregation of culture, see Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital." The concept of symbolic capital is elaborated upon at large in Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). See also Bourdieu, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Minuit, 1979).

sources for knowledge which would, in turn, provide them with recognition and respect, in the Republic of Letters. On the other hand, many powerful politicians and merchants had the means to effectively contribute to the discovery and circulation of knowledge in the Republic of Letters, either by becoming patron or Maecenas to promising researchers or by participating directly in the learned community as scholars, like Cuper and many of his contemporaries.¹⁸

Cuper profited from these different ways of transforming one kind of capital into another. His confirmed status as professor of history and rhetoric (cultural capital)¹⁹ before he became a member of the States General gave him the advantage of being involved in more honorable tasks than those strictly prescribed for delegates; thus he became the person the States General relied upon to translate official letters, charters, and documents into Latin. It was Cuper who translated a letter from Grand Pensionary Fagel to James Stuart,²⁰ containing the opinions of William and Mary on James's attempts to abolish the Test Act, which would become a crucial pamphlet in the years before the Glorious Revolution. Furthermore he wrote up resolutions to maintain the balance of power among the allies during the War of the Spanish Succession.²¹ At the same time, reluctant to lose his standing as a full-time professional scholar, he made sure that his rise in politics and his accumulation of political power would bolster his fame in the Republic of Letters. He did so by becoming an intermediary. This was an empowering role, to which his correspondence network was fundamental.

"Without you, Monsieur, & without several other friends I would know virtually nothing about what goes on in the Republic of Letters." These words were addressed to Cuper in a letter of November 11, 1712, by Mathurin Veyssi re La Croze (1661–1739), librarian of the Prussian

¹⁸ A good example is Nicolaes Witsen (1641–1717), a very good friend and correspondent of Cuper. They met in 1683 in The Hague, where they both attended the meetings of the States-General; Cuper as a representative of Overijssel and Witsen of Holland. Moreover, Witsen had many other functions throughout his career. Besides as burgomaster of Amsterdam he served as extraordinary ambassador in England and in several other political functions, but most notably he was, from 1694 onwards, one of the seventeen board members of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which put him in an extraordinarily powerful position to become the patron of many different people from whom he commissioned expeditions and collectibles from the remotest corners of the eastern hemisphere. Besides, Witsen himself published about ancient and modern shipbuilding and an exploration of Tartary. A PhD thesis appeared recently in which Witsen's efforts at promoting Amsterdam's trade are connected to his research agenda. His correspondence with Cuper figures prominently, in a separate chapter: Marion Peters, "Mercator Sapiens (De Wijze Koopman): Het Wereldwijde Onderzoek Van Nicolaes Witsen (1641–1717), Burgemeester En Voc-Bewindhebber Van Amsterdam" (PhD thesis, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2008). For the relationship between Cuper and Witsen, see also Marion Peters "Nicolaes Witsen and Gijsbert Cuper: Two Seventeenth-Century Dutch Burgomasters and Their Gordian Knot," *LIAS* 16, no. 1 (1989): 111–51. For another recent study of seventeenth-century commerce and science in the Dutch Republic, see Harold John Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

¹⁹ Cultural capital: one's accumulation of culture, cultivation, Bildung, which has to be inculcated by the individual but can be institutionally accredited in the form of diplomas and academic titles. See Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital."

²⁰ A. J. Veenendaal, "Gisbert Cuper 1644–1716," in *Overijsselse Portretten*, ed. T. J. de Vries (Zwolle: J. J. Till, 1958). Cuper's translation of the pamphlet, from Dutch into Latin, was then translated into English by Gilbert Burnet. Cuper carefully preserved a manuscript copy of the letter he translated for Fagel among a printed copy and copies of reactions to the letter, NA 1.10.24, inv. no. 1, 19–89. For the context of the Test Act, see John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England 1660–1688* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), about this letter, 253–55.

²¹ Veenendaal, "Gisbert Cuper 1644–1716," 84–85. During the War of the Spanish Succession, the idea of "balance of power" was often attributed to Stadholder-King William. See Evan Luard, *The Balance of Power: The System of International Relations, 1648–1815* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1992), 10–12.

Kings Friedrich I and Friedrich Wilhelm I in Berlin.²² They indicate how essential having the right contacts was for the supply of *nouvelles littéraires*, news about scholarship and current affairs in the Republic of Letters. As Berkvens-Stevelinck and Bots point out, to circulate information was the duty of each citizen in the Republic of Letters, whether it was through letters, journals, publications, or travel, for the circulation of objects, news, manuscripts, and observations constituted the Republic of Letters.²³ Access to and participation in an extensive network of correspondence was crucial for every scholar.

However, only the lucky few could afford the luxury of a large network of correspondents across Europe.²⁴ Cuper was one of them. He was in a position to transmit news, ideas, and goods from one person to another, functioning as a cultural intermediary. Thus, among the “great correspondents” of the early modern period, he has been attributed a special role by Berkvens-Stevelinck and Bots in their introduction to *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la république des lettres*. They held that, although not having produced a large *oeuvre* himself, still he was a sort of “secretary of the Republic of Letters,” that is, someone who put himself at the service of the scholarly community by providing others with the books and information they needed to carry out their work. Without necessarily being innovators, such secretaries constituted the nodes of the network by linking together scholars who were working on the same topic or in the same field.²⁵ Alternatively, within the networks of correspondence in the Republic of Letters, men like Cuper can also be thought of as “information brokers,” agents, middlemen, or mediators.²⁶

Cuper could perform this task because he had firmly embedded himself in a vast epistolary network that can still be traced in the letters extant today. The way in which he preserved his letters demonstrates how precious they were to him, both as tools of communication and as mementos of past scholarly exchanges. The travelogue of the German bibliophile Conrad von Uffenbach (1683–1734) provides us with insight into Cuper’s way of preserving his correspondence. In a report about his visit to Deventer in 1711, Uffenbach noted that Cuper had a library that was modest in size, but beautiful and precious, with many exceptional antiquarian books that he owed to the friendships he kept by correspondence with different Italian “Curiosi,”²⁷ including the Grand Duke of Florence and Pope Clement XI. Uffenbach was impressed by the letters Cuper had collected, even more than by the books. In his travel journal, he refers to about twenty parcels of letters, each measuring the size of a man’s fist, arranged by the correspondent’s

²² Mathurin Veyssière La Croze to Cuper, 11 November 1712, quoted in Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 13. For La Croze, see Martin Mulrow, *Die Drei Ringe: Toleranz Und Clandestine Gelehrsamkeit Bei Mathurin Veyssière La Croze (1661–1739)* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001).

²³ Berkvens-Stevelinck and Bots, introduction to *Les grands intermédiaires culturels*, 10–12; Bots and Waquet, *La république des lettres*, 117–18; Dibon, “Communication in the Respublica Literaria,” 52; Ultee, “The Republic of Letters,” 97–98.

²⁴ Bots and Waquet, *La république des lettres*, 118.

²⁵ Berkvens-Stevelinck and Bots, introduction to *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la république des lettres*, 18–19. Besides Cuper, Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, the brothers Dupuy, Lucas Holstenius, Claude Nicaise, and Pierre Desmaizeaux are also mentioned as secretaries of the Republic of Letters.

²⁶ For a collection of essays on different forms of early modern agency, see Cools, Keblusek, and Noldus, eds., *Your Humble Servant*.

²⁷ Translates as “curious or inquisitive persons.”

name or his country of origin. Uffenbach praised it as “quite a rare collection, and there is almost no learned antiquary in the world, whose letters from all over the world cannot be seen here.”²⁸

By 1702, Cuper had already collected 50 volumes of letters. From then onwards he started keeping copies of his own letters together with the letters they replied to, because he had realized that his old habit of keeping copies in separate notebooks, unsorted by recipient, made it difficult for him to track down replies to letters received. By 1708, he had decided that he wanted to rearrange his complete collection in that fashion and cut open his old notebooks—recopying bits and pieces of letters in order to create volumes of correspondence sorted by correspondent or by country.

In 1710, Cuper estimated that he had collected 100 volumes of letters, and he considered them “as a little treasure of paper and literature.”²⁹ It had taken him more than two years to compile his complete epistolary exchanges with individual scholars in chronological order, but, as he confessed to one of his correspondents, “hard work overcomes everything, and now I enjoy that I can find much better all the funny stories I have written.”³⁰ Today, we can fortunately still find all those “funny stories” in the Dutch National Library (Koninklijke Bibliotheek) and the National Archive (Nationaal Archief) in The Hague, for the most part in their original bindings.

A preliminary survey of extant letters shows that the total number of known correspondents with whom Cuper exchanged at least one letter is 294.³¹ The preserved correspondence contains some particularly voluminous exchanges of letters with single correspondents, extending through twenty or thirty years of regular exchange or shorter periods of intensive contact with one person. If we take the volume of each separate correspondence as an indication of its significance, and we count those that comprise more than 30 letters, then we arrive at 49 core correspondents (see appendix). The number of Cuper’s correspondents and the volume of his correspondence³² is considerable in comparison with other scholars of the seventeenth century.³³ Only the best-known scholars—who were often politicians or diplomats as well, like

²⁸ Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, *Merkwürdige Reisen durch Niersachsen, Holland und Engelland* (Ulm, 1753), 2:386: “ganz ungemeyner Vorrath, und ist fast kein gelehrter Antiquarius in der Welt, von dem nicht Briefe aus allen Landen allhier zu sehen.”

²⁹ Cuper to the count of Flodrof, 29 June 1710, quoted in Veenendaal, *Het Dagboek Van Gisbert Cuper*, xviii: “et je le considère comme un petit trésor de papier et de littérature.”

³⁰ Cuper to Van den Bergh, 13 May 1708, quoted in *ibid.*: “labor improbus omnia vincit, en ick heb daer nu plaisir in, om sooveel te beter te kunnen vinden wat al voor grollen geschreven heb.”

³¹ In the course of my ongoing research on “Cuper and the dynamics of the Republic of Letters,” I might find more correspondents.

³² A rough, preliminary estimate of the amount of extant letters to and from Cuper, kept in the Dutch National Library (Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KB) and National Archive (NA) and the Historic Centre of Overijssel, where his letters from The Hague to the States General of Overijssel are kept, goes well beyond 5000.

³³ It is difficult to make a comparison because many letters of many scholars have been lost throughout the centuries, but here I give the numbers for some of the most well-known seventeenth-century scholarly correspondents. For Marin Mersenne, called the “secretary-general of the Republic of Letters” by Bots, 1135 letters are extant, exchanged with “several hundred” correspondents: Hans Bots, “Marin Mersenne, ‘Secrétaire Général’ De La République Des Lettres (1620–1648),” in *Les Grands Intermédiaires Culturels De La République Des Lettres*, 168. Father and brothers Dupuy shared 243 correspondents who wrote 5676 (extant) letters: Jérôme Delatour, “Les Frères Dupuy et leurs correspondences,” in *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la république des lettres*, 62–70. Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc sent 5178 letters to 793 correspondents over a period of only ten years: Peter N. Miller, “Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc and the Mediterranean World: Mechanics,” in *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la république des lettres*, 106–7. The Jesuit Father Athanasius Kircher received 2291 letters from 763 correspondents: Nick Wilding, “Appendix I: Kircher’s Correspondence,” in *The Great Art of Knowing: The Baroque Encyclopedia of Athanasius*

Hugo Grotius, Constantijn Huygens, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz—could boast markedly more correspondents or a vaster correspondence than Cuper.³⁴

According to Cuper, hiding one's light under a bushel did not contribute to anything.³⁵ Instead, as mentioned, to participate in the learned community, one had to communicate one's opinions and discoveries. Publication was one way to do that, correspondence another. Correspondence was not merely ancillary to publication, but complementary, meaning that through an effective network of correspondence scholars could gain as much honor as publication.³⁶ If we want to evaluate Cuper's merits within the context of contemporary priorities and practices, we therefore have to remind ourselves that his scholarly output was not fundamental to his esteem in the eyes of contemporaries, at least when measured in terms of publications alone.³⁷ They fully acknowledged his beneficence to the Republic of Letters on the basis of his great *commercium litterarium*. This may account for the reputation he established, a reputation which eventually (in 1715) led to his honorary membership of the Parisian *Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres*, without his having published a book for nearly twenty years. During that time he did keep up extensive correspondence with members of the Académie and their director Jean-Paul Bignon (1662–1743). *Communico ergo sum* could very well have been Cuper's motto,³⁸ indicating and underlining his role as secretary of the Republic of Letters. By receiving, storing, and assessing as much knowledge as he could and including in his network experts in different fields to whom he could turn for help, as well as using his own scholarly capacities for research and analy-

Kircher, ed. Daniel Stolzenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 141. Kircher made use of the extensive network of the Jesuits, which had their own thoroughly efficient manner of circulating knowledge, which is elaborated upon in Harris, "Confession-Building, Long-Distance Networks, and the Organization of Jesuit Science."

³⁴ Leibniz: 15,000 letters extant at the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek - Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek in Hannover. See <http://www.nlb-hannover.de/Leibniz/Leibniz-Nachlass/>. See also Nora Gädeke, "Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz," in *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la république des lettres*. Of Grotius 7725 letters extant are sent to and from 369 correspondents: Henk Nellen, "The Correspondence of Hugo Grotius," in *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la république des lettres*, 131. An estimate for Huygens (8500 letters) is presented in H. J. M. Nellen, "Editing 17th-Century Scholarly Correspondence: Grotius, Huygens and Mersenne," *LIAS* 17, no. 1 (1990): 9–20.

³⁵ Cuper to Jean-Paul Bignon, 23 April 1709, in: [Jean de Beyer], ed., *Lettres de critique, d'histoire, de littérature, &c. écrites à divers savans de l'Europe par feu Monsieur Gisbert Cuper* (Amsterdam, 1742), 219.

³⁶ Paul Lodge, introduction to *Leibniz and His Correspondents*, ed. Paul Lodge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17. Lodge asserts that Leibniz was more famous among his contemporaries for his great correspondence than for his publications.

³⁷ During Cuper's lifetime, the following titles appeared: Gisbert Cuper, *Apotheosis Vel Consecratio Homeri. Sive, Lapis Antiquissimus in Quo Poëtarum Principis Homeri Consecratio Sculpta Est, Commentario Illustratus a Gisberto Cupero* (Amsterdam, 1683); Gisbert Cuper, *Harpocrates Seu Explicatio Imagunculae Argenteae Antiquissimae, Sub Harpocratis Figura Ex Aegyptorum Instituto Solem Repraesentantis: Qua Varii Auctorum Loci, Hieroglyphicae Notae, Numismata, Basilidianorum Gemmae, Nec Non Marmora Nova Luce Perfunduntur* (Amsterdam, 1676); Gisbert Cuper, *Harpocrates, Sive Explicatio Imagunculae Argenteae Perantiquae; Quae in Figuram Harpocratis Formata Representat Solem. Ejusdem Monumenta Antiqua Inedita. Multi Auctorum Loci, Multae Inscriptiones, Marmora, Nummi, Gemmae, Varii Ritus, & Antiquitates in Utroque Opusculo Emendantur & Illustrantur. Accedit Stephani Le Moine Epistola De Melanophoris*, 1687 ed. (Utrecht, 1687); Gisbert Cuper, *Historia Trium Gordianorum* (Deventer, 1697); Gisbert Cuper, *Observationum Liber Quartus. In Quo Antiqui Ritus Eruntur; Auctores Graeci & Latini, Emendantur Atque Illustrantur* (Deventer, 1678); Gisbert Cuper, *Observationum Libri Tres. In Quibus Multi Auctorum Loci, Qua Explicantur, Qua Emendantur, Varii Ritus Eruntur, & Nummis Elegantissimus Illustratis* (Utrecht, 1670). He prepared more works, but his other occupations and his modest incertitude prevented him from publishing them; see Veenendaal, *Het Dagboek Van Gisbert Cuper*.

³⁸ In fact, it is unknown what was Cuper's real motto. Attached to his portraits we find *honesto suo ingenio* "right-minded by nature" and (posthumously) *vivitur ingenio, caetera mortis erunt*, "one lives on by his spirit, the rest will belong to death."

sis of the material under scrutiny, Cuper could provide answers to many questions relatively quickly, gaining the honorary epithet “oracle of the world of learning”³⁹ that his contemporaries bestowed upon him.

Cuper’s political career, i.e. his accumulation of political power, enhanced his possibilities to exploit his social capital, to such an extent that from 1681 onwards he was able to mobilize diplomatic and consular networks for the satisfaction of his own scholarly curiosity. The availability of a diplomatic network was imperative, because postal services were expensive and unreliable; thus those scholars who could profit from diplomatic postal services were in an advantageous position to maintain and increase their correspondence.⁴⁰ Indeed, a tentative calculation and distribution of the extant letters over time indicates that after his move to The Hague, Cuper yearly sent and received relatively more (scholarly) letters than before.⁴¹ A few examples of Cuper’s correspondence with diplomats, representatives of merchant communities, and their entourage abroad, show how he used diplomatic channels to transfer scholarly information and objects, as well as proving that the content generated within this “diplomatic correspondence” was beneficial for the conduct of scholarship in the Republic of Letters.

THE POWER TO COMMAND KNOWLEDGE

From the very outset of his career in The Hague in 1681,⁴² Cuper regularly exchanged letters with Christiaan Constantijn Rumpf (1636–1706), the Dutch Resident in Stockholm.⁴³ It is probable that their correspondence started as a direct result of Cuper’s rise in the political hierarchy of the Dutch Republic, although we cannot be certain.⁴⁴ In his letters, Rumpf consciously addressed Cuper as his patron, and even gave his youngest son, born in 1683, the name of his benefactor, Gisbert. Exactly what Cuper had done up to that date to deserve such an honor remains unclear, but in 1684, due to his insistence, the States General granted Rumpf permission to return to the Dutch Republic for a short period—a privilege which Rumpf had been eagerly awaiting for more than ten years.⁴⁵ After 1698, there is, curiously enough, no existing correspondence between Cuper and scholars and diplomats in Sweden. Why the exchange of letters between Rumpf and Cuper ended so suddenly is puzzling, but it is clear that during nearly twenty

³⁹ Peters, “Nicolaes Witsen and Gijsbert Cuper,” 118.

⁴⁰ Berkvens-Stevelinck and Bots, introduction to *Les grands intermédiaires culturels de la république des lettres*, 19; Bots and Waquet, *La république des lettres*, 131.

⁴¹ From the catalogue of the National Library I have counted the letters from the collection that are indicated to have been written before and after 1681. As most of Cuper’s separate exchanges of letters with different scholars started before and continued beyond 1681 and lack a precise inventory, I have roughly estimated the number of letters they wrote per year before and after 1681. Put together, these rough data show that before 1681 Cuper exchanged on average 73 letters per year, whereas after 1681 this average rose to 97. In this calculation I have not even taken account of the letters in the National Archive that have all been written after 1681. In the course of my research I hope to improve the reliability of these numbers.

⁴² Cuper was sworn in on January 16, 1681, as is stated in the *Resoluties van de Gedeputeerden der Staten van Overijssel, 1593–1794*, Historisch Centrum Overijssel (Zwolle), 3.1.02.1.1.2, inv. no. 379.

⁴³ Schutte, *Repertorium Der Nederlandse Vertegenwoordigers*, 16–18.

⁴⁴ The first extant letter is not very the first letter Cuper and Rumpf exchanged, so their correspondence may have started earlier. The letters between Rumpf and Cuper are preserved in NA 1.10.24, inv. no. 16, and KB 72 C 10.

⁴⁵ Peter J. A. N. Rietbergen, “C. C. Rumpf, G. Cuper and Cultural Relations between Sweden and the Dutch Republic During the Last Quarter of the 17th Century,” in *Baltic Affairs: Relations between the Netherlands and North-Eastern Europe, 1500–1800*, ed. J. Ph. S. Lemmink and J. S. A. M. Koningsbrugge (Nijmegen: Institute for Northern and Eastern European Studies, 1990), 322–23.

years of exchanging letters, they contributed greatly to the diplomatic, scholarly, and cultural relations between Sweden and the Dutch Republic.⁴⁶

For his part, Rumpf acted as an intermediary between Swedish scholars and Cuper, by sending him books and manuscripts and by putting him into contact with scholars in Sweden.⁴⁷ Likewise, Cuper provided Rumpf with books and, among other things, copies of scholarly journals published in the Dutch Republic. Rumpf not only read those books, but also passed them to interested men and women. He even read Cuper's letters aloud during meetings with his friends from the cultural elite of Stockholm—among them Queen Ulrika Eleonora—who were eager to hear Rumpf read every word of Cuper's well-styled Latin epistles in which political news was usually intermingled with remarks on the state of the Dutch learned community.⁴⁸ Moreover, Cuper's occasional poems celebrating important events in Sweden would be printed and distributed as soon as Rumpf got hold of them. According to Rietbergen, by pleasing the highest Swedish officials with his letters, Cuper managed to find "valuable allies for the Dutch Republic he tried to serve"; in so doing, he secured "his own fame and the favor it might bring him."⁴⁹

Cuper's interactions with Rumpf not only provided him political fame, but contributed even more to his reputation as an involved scholar and a cultural intermediary. The Swedish correspondents, to whom Cuper had been introduced by Rumpf, complained continuously about the lack of intellectual incentive and infrastructure in their region. Cuper negotiated for their books to be issued by Dutch publishers; as such, he could overcome the near absence of publishers in Sweden and establish deep cultural ties between the two countries.⁵⁰ But not only the Swedes profited from the exchange, for Cuper was rewarded with most of the books that did appear in Sweden, and even with some precious manuscripts, for example those of Johannes Meursius (1579–1639) that he delivered to Johannes Georgius Graevius (1632–1703) who undertook to publish them.⁵¹ He also provided Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) and Henri Basnage de Beauval (1656–1710), the respective editors of *Nouvelles de la république des lettres* and *Histoire des ouvrages des savans*, with books and news from Sweden to be included in their journals. In this way Cuper opened a window to the North, for which he was praised by Basnage, who asserted that

we have so little exchange with scholars from the North that their books are still new to us even after several years. Therefore we have no qualms about profiting from those that have fallen into our hands though the gentle care of Mr. (Representative in the States General) Cuper, whose impor-

⁴⁶ On scholarly or scientific relations between Sweden and the Low Countries, see also E. Wrangel, *De Betrekkingen Tussen Zweden En De Nederlanden Op Het Gebied Van Letteren En Wetenschap Voornamelijk Gedurende De Zeventiende Eeuw* (Leiden: 1901).

⁴⁷ The letters exchanged between Cuper and Swedes, amongst whom were Johannes Bilberg (1646–1717), Johannes Columbus (1640–1684), Johannes Gezelius (1615–1690), Lars Norman (1651–1703), Elias Obrecht (1653–1698), and Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeldt (1655–1727), are kept in the National Library in The Hague: KB 72 C 10.

⁴⁸ Rietbergen, "C. C. Rumpf, G. Cuper and Cultural Relations between Sweden and the Dutch Republic," 323–26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 326–30.

⁵¹ Rietbergen asserts that Cuper himself wanted to publish Meursius' work, but Rumpf clearly stated that he sent the manuscripts to Cuper for Graevius (Rumpf to Cuper, 29 May 1686, NA 1.10.24, inv. no. 16, fols. 196–98, at 198). Indeed, in 1687, Graevius published (some of) the works of Meursius.

tant and distracting occupations do not prevent his curiosity for good books from spreading everywhere, and [do not prevent him] from illuminating the Republic of Letters with his writings.⁵²

Although the numerous books Cuper sent to his Swedish friends through Rumpf cannot be discussed in detail here, it is important to note that, in addition to books, he also forwarded the latest news about the output of not only the Dutch presses, but the Italian ones as well. In the latter case he was able to do so because Antonio Magliabechi (1633–1714), librarian of the Grand Duke of Florence, regularly kept him updated on the output of the Italian scholarly presses.⁵³ Thus, through Rumpf, Cuper was genuinely an intermediary between the North and South of the European Republic of Letters.⁵⁴

Cuper was also a middleman between East and West, as is attested by his voluminous correspondence with Jacob Colyer (1657–1725), Dutch Ambassador in Constantinople,⁵⁵ and his brother in law, Daniel Jan de Hochepped (1657–1723), Consul in Smyrna.⁵⁶ When necessary, Cuper would act as their patron, and help them by pleading their case in the States General. The latter he did for Jacob Colyer when a large part of the Consul's house had tragically burnt down. In requesting his assistance, Colyer wrote to Cuper

The damage is so great that I cannot put it to words, and it can only be overcome when the representatives in the States General, with their famous charity and mildness will be willing to lighten our burden, or come to our aid. You, Sir, if you so will, with your great reputation and power, can do a great deal, even if you are not in The Hague, by writing favourable letters and recommendations to your friends, and I do not doubt there should be a good result. Meanwhile I ask you, Sir, to forgive me taking such liberty, for the proof you gave me from time to time of your protection and care, has caused me to do so.⁵⁷

Colyer's plea for help was heard: in January 1701 he thanked Cuper for the extreme kindness he had bestowed upon him by recommending his case to the deputies in The Hague.⁵⁸

The largest part of the letters exchanged between Cuper, Colyer, and De Hochepped, however, was concerned with news, most notably political and military news. These letters sometimes included highly detailed accounts of the movement of troops, negotiations between

⁵² Quoted in Rietbergen, "C. C. Rumpf, G. Cuper and Cultural Relations between Sweden and the Dutch Republic," 342: "nous avons si peu de commerce avec les Savans du Nord, que leurs livres nous sont encore nouveaux meme après quelques années. Nous profiterons donc sans scrupule de quelques-uns de cette nature qui nous sont tombez entre les mains par les soins obligeans de Mr. (Deputé aux Etats Generaux) Cuper, que l'importance et la distraction de ses emplois n'empêchent point d'étendre par tout sa curiosité pour les bons livres, et d'illustrer la Republique des Lettres par ses écrits."

⁵³ Correspondence between Cuper and Magliabechi: KB 72 D 10–12.

⁵⁴ Rietbergen, "C. C. Rumpf, G. Cuper and Cultural Relations between Sweden and the Dutch Republic," 340.

⁵⁵ Schutte, *Repertorium Der Nederlandse Vertegenwoordigers*, 308–9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 309.

⁵⁷ Colyer to Cuper 24 September 1700, NA 1.10.24, inv. no. 12, fols. 37–40, at 39: "De geleden schade is ook soo groot, dat mijn pen niet bequaem is deselve te connen uijtdrucken, ende niet te versetten is, ten ware haer Ho: Mo: met hare beroemde goedertier- en mildadigheijt ons eenieger maten belieften te verlichten, of te hulp te comen, waertoe UWHo: EdGestr. des believende door sijn groot Credit en gesagh, alschoon hij sig niet in den Haag mogte bevinden, met favorable voorschrijvens en recommandatie aen sijn vrinden, veel doen can, als wanneer aen het gewenste succes niet dubiteer, middelwyljen versoeck, dat UWHo: EdGestr. mij de vrijheijt, dien ik neem, belieft te pardonneeren, alsoo de preuves die sij mij van tijt tot tijt van hare protectie en genegentheijt heeft believen te geven, daervan de oorsaek sijn."

⁵⁸ Colyer to Cuper, 24 January 1701, NA 1.10.24, inv. no. 12, fols. 41–44, at 41.

different countries or parties, and the retirement or new appointment of members of diplomatic corps and the merchant community. Moreover, more general comments on the present state of affairs appear in the letters, such as news about religious festivals, epidemic diseases, and court gossip. As the intimacy of the relation between Cuper and his correspondents grew with the numbers of letters they wrote, they exchanged details about personal and family life as well. Surprisingly, in his letters Cuper also painstakingly provided the latest news from Europe to his “humble servants,” signing his letters just like they did, with “your humble servant, Gisbert Cuper.” In light of this it is probable that their relationship was more complex than simply one between patron and client. It was based on a reciprocal exchange of news, goods, and services, although Cuper did profit considerably from their correspondence—but then again so did the Republic of Letters.

THE DISCOVERY OF PALMYRA

In addition to a reciprocal exchange of news, correspondence with Colyer and De Hochepped had something unique to offer—something for which Cuper would gladly give his political protection. Colyer and De Hochepped inhabited the cradle of civilization in which Cuper, as an antiquarian scholar, took so much interest. The following example relates how Cuper, with the aid of another Consul, Coenraad Calckberner (+1694)⁵⁹ in Aleppo, was able to furnish European scholars with new material for the study of the ancient past. Already before Calckberner arrived in Aleppo (probably when he was about to leave Amsterdam), Cuper sent him a missive in which he urged the new Consul to gather copies of all the inscriptions that were found in the region of Aleppo, to buy ancient coins for him and to deliver pictures of ancient statues and reliefs.⁶⁰ Calckberner initially answered some general questions about the inhabitants and the rulers of the region and the ancient names of the city of Aleppo,⁶¹ but then remained silent for a long time.

In 1693, however, Calckberner sent invaluable things to Cuper; some rare ancient coins, a painting of the ruins of Palmyra, and the manuscript of a travel report written by a minister in the company of the first Europeans who had visited the ancient Syrian city.⁶² In return, Cuper supplied Calckberner, who himself took an interest in antiquity, with analyses and commentaries on the goods he had provided, notably on the coins, of which many were “very rare and never published before.”⁶³ He would probably have done the same with his findings on the inscriptions from Palmyra, taken from the travel report that Calckberner provided to him, if the Consul had not died shortly after. Cuper did, however, enthusiastically spread the inscriptions from the travel journal to scholars in his network of correspondence. His aim was twofold: gathering as

⁵⁹ Consul in Aleppo 1689–1694, see Schutte, *Repertorium Der Nederlandse Vertegenwoordigers*, 351.

⁶⁰ Cuper to Calckberner, 31 March 1688, KB 72 C 3, fol. 33r.

⁶¹ Calckberner to Cuper, 18 August 1688, KB 72 C 3, fols. 36r–37r.

⁶² Calckberner to Cuper, July 1692, KB 72 C 3, fols. 49r–50r: in this letter he announced that the painter was finishing the painting. Calckberner to Cuper, 3 April 1693, KB 72 C 3, fols. 51r–52r: in this letter Calckberner told Cuper that he was about to ship the painting, coins, and the travel account to him. Calckberner to Cuper, 12 July 1694, KB 72 C 3, fols. 38r–39v: in this letter Calckberner wrote that he was very happy to read Cuper’s “generous expressions” of thanks for the travelogue in his preceding letter.

⁶³ Cuper to Calckberner, 4 September 1694, KB 72 C 3, fols. 40r–48v: “numismata nonnulla equidem rariora sunt et inedita” (fol. 40r).

much expertise knowledge as possible on the hitherto unknown inscriptions and finding a way to publish the entire travelogue complete with an erudite commentary.⁶⁴

After receiving the travel report with the inscriptions in 1694, Cuper instantly wrote to Graevius, his good friend and fellow scholar in Utrecht, with the news of his discovery. He acknowledged that he could not read the report—for it was written in English—but waiting to have it translated, he had entertained himself with the Greek inscriptions. He copied some for Graevius that contained valuable new information about the Palmyrene’s calculation of time, the genealogy of their rulers, and the names of some of their gods.⁶⁵

In May, Cuper obtained a Dutch translation of the English manuscript. He sent it to Graevius, asking him whether he could highlight those passages which were interesting enough to be published in Latin or French. Graevius was immediately convinced of the need to publish the complete travelogue and agreed to produce a Latin translation with the Utrecht printer François Halma.⁶⁶ Now, the problem was to find a capable translator, a problem which, due to bad luck, was not easily solved: one candidate was progressively visually impaired,⁶⁷ the next one was reluctant to start the work, etc.⁶⁸ In the meantime, another copy of the manuscript was published in the *Philosophical Transactions*, the journal of the Royal Society in London.⁶⁹ This copy of the travel report had been sent directly by the author William Halifax to Edward Bernard (1638–1697), an Orientalist and astronomer in Oxford, who had, in turn, forwarded it to Thomas Smith (1638–1710), who in 1695 published it in the *Philosophical Transactions*. Furthermore, an account of the history of Palmyra, partly based upon the travel account, was published—also in English—by Abednego Seller (1646?-1705).⁷⁰

Finally, in 1697, a Latin review of the travel account, by Neocorus, a pseudonym of Ludolphus Kuster (1670–1716), appeared in the journal *Bibliotheca Librorum Novorum*.⁷¹ Only from that moment forward was the discovery of Palmyra accessible to the larger European audience which was unable to read English. Cuper wrote to Graevius that he was pleased with the review and that it was a good summary of the most important discoveries, but that he hoped that he himself could publish the account once again, supplemented with the findings and remarks he had received from diverse scholars,⁷² most notably his friends among the French clergy, such as the Maurists Bernard de Montfaucon (1655–1741) and Antoine Pouget (1650–1709), Bishop

⁶⁴ The basis for such a publication resides in the Cuper collection of the National Library in The Hague, KB 72 C 3.

⁶⁵ Cuper to Graevius, 16 January 1694, Bodleian Library, Oxford (Bodl.), MSS D’Orville 478, fol. 84r: “quae sunt quanti vis pretii, et Complectuntur nomina Romanis & nostris auribus inaudita, ad hos ritus, qui nescio an alibi obvii sint.” The inscriptions are inserted on a loose sheet of paper, Bodl., MSS D’Orville 478, fols. 116r–117r.

⁶⁶ Graevius to Cuper, 31 May 1694, KB, 72 C 2, fol. 214r–v.

⁶⁷ Graevius to Cuper, 23 November 1695, KB, 72 C 2, fol. 220r. Graevius wrote that the travelogue was returned to him without a translation.

⁶⁸ Cuper to Graevius, [ca.] August 1696, Bodl., MSS D’Orville 478, fol. 128r–v: “sed nondum illi manus admovit.”

⁶⁹ “A Relation of a Voyage from Aleppo to Palmyra in Syria; Sent by, the Reverend Mr. William Halifax to Dr. Edw. Bernard (Late) Savilian Professor of Astronomy in Oxford, and by Him Communicated to Dr. Thomas Smith,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, no. 127 (1695): 83–110.

⁷⁰ Abednego Seller, *The Antiquities of Palmyra. Containing the History of the City, and Its Emperors, from Its Foundation to the Present Time. With an Appendix of Critical Observations on the Names, Religion, and Government of the Country. And a Commentary on the Inscriptions Lately Found There* (London, 1686).

⁷¹ Ludolphus Kuster, “The Antiquities of Palmyra &C.,” *Bibliotheca Librorum Novorum* (1697): 381–403.

⁷² Cuper to Graevius, 29 October 1697, Bodl., MSS D’Orville 478, fol. 138r.

Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630–1721) of Avranches, Abbot Eusèbe Renaudot (1646–1720), Abbot Claude Nicaise (1623–1701), and Nicholas Toinard (1627–1706).⁷³

Notwithstanding his satisfaction with Kuster's summary, Cuper must have been slightly disappointed that Kuster had not contacted him, for it was well-known that Cuper had collected more material, valuable too, in addition to the travelogue. For example, already alongside the extract from the account in the *Philosophical Transactions*, a letter of October 1695 was published in which Bernard urged Smith to publish the extract as a “not unpleasant appetizer, until the well-known and very learned man Cuper shall publish additional material on the city of Salomon and its ruins.”⁷⁴ Moreover, in one of the three copies of Sellers's book, held by the Bodleian Library in Oxford, a small fragment from a journal was pasted, mentioning only Cuper as the recipient of the manuscript of the journey to Palmyra.⁷⁵

Finally, in 1698, Cornelis de Bruyn (1652?-1727), a traveler who had been to Syria, but had not visited Palmyra himself, published a Dutch version of the travel account. An artist, de Bruyn provided an engraving of the ruins of Palmyra that was taken from the one in the *Philosophical Transactions*. He boasted, however, that he had added some improvements, as he had seen them on a painting of the ruins that had arrived from Aleppo to Amsterdam.⁷⁶ This was undoubtedly Cuper's painting. Apparently Cuper had given de Bruyn permission to critically study his painting; moreover, it seems that Cuper was in the possession of the “master copy” of the painting of the ruins of Palmyra. Indeed, the drawing that served as the basis for the engraving in the *Philosophical Transactions* was probably taken from Cuper's “master copy”—but incompletely so. Cuper had thus been the first European antiquarian scholar to see a depiction of the magnificent ruins of Palmyra.⁷⁷ The value of Cuper's contact with Calkberner for the advancement of his studies, which formed part of a larger European attempt to understand the past, should, therefore, not be underestimated. The same is true for the role Cuper himself played as an intermediary between East and West, from the comfort of his study in provincial Deventer.

CUPER: SOCIAL CAPITAL, KNOWLEDGE, AND RECOGNITION IN THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS

Cuper bridged the spheres of politics and learning in a masterly fashion. Clearly, he was not the only one who did so, for in the powerful Dutch Republic many regents sought to fruitfully combine their political or commercial affairs with the accumulation of knowledge. However, even if

⁷³ This was a prominent group of scholars, mostly interested in (Oriental) inscriptions, biblical criticism, and critical examination of the writings of the early Church. Montfaucon and Renaudot were members of the *Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres*, whereas Huet was a member of the *Académie française*. For a recent monograph on Huet, see April G. Shelford, *Transforming the Republic of Letters: Pierre-Daniel Huet and European Intellectual Life, 1650–1720* (Rochester: University of Rochester, 2007).

⁷⁴ Edward Bernard to Thomas Smith, 7 October 1695, in “A Relation of a Voyage,” 83–84: “donec vir illustris & adprime doctus D. Cuperus uberiora forte ediderit de urbe Solomonis ejusque reliquiis.”

⁷⁵ Fragment pasted on the back of the cover of Seller's *The Antiquities of Palmyra*, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Bod Douce S 772).

⁷⁶ Cornelis de Bruyn, *Reizen Van Cornelis De Bruyn, Door De Vermaardste Deelen Van Klein Asia, De Eylanden Scio, Rhodos, Cyprus, Metelino, Stanchio, Etc. Mitsgaders De Voornaamste Steden Van Aegypten, Syrien En Palestina, Verrijkt Met Meer Als 200 Kopere Konstplaat, Vertoonende De Beroemdste Landschappen, Steden, Etc. Alles Door Den Auteur Selfs Na Het Leven Afgetekend* (Delft: Henrik van Krooneveld, 1698), 335.

⁷⁷ Today Cuper's large panorama painting of the ruins of Palmyra, *Gezicht op Palmyra*, can be admired in the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam. The site of ancient Palmyra was added to the Unesco World Heritage List in 1980.

he was not the most influential among the regents, Cuper's extant correspondence shows that he managed to contribute to the knowledge of antiquity, especially of the near East. Significantly, this increase in knowledge resulted from the interplay of actors in various geographical spaces and various professional fields through the Republic of Letters.

These examples of cooperation show that many of those who played a role in Cuper's quest for knowledge were not themselves scholars. Most of them were first and foremost servants of the Dutch Republic, as diplomats or tradesmen, although some also had a genuine interest in the world of letters. The examples of Rumpf and Calckberner are particularly interesting. They draw attention to the mechanisms of patronage and exchange that put scholars like Cuper in the position to demand and obtain precious objects and information from committed state servants. The enlargement of his social capital thus fostered his accumulation of knowledge and material for study. Further, he would circulate the objects and information in the Republic of Letters such that those scholars with the greatest expertise could study them collectively. If we return to the motto I imagine to have been Cuper's, *communico ergo sum*, it must be clear by now that regardless of the value of his limited scholarly output, Cuper's ability to play the role of intermediary, or secretary, of the Republic of Letters was greatly enhanced when he entered the highest governing body of a more worldly Republic.

Although he never succeeded in publishing his collection of material on the ruins of Palmyra, it was well known that Cuper possessed an unusual painting, as well as a curious travelogue with additional publishable material. This was known even to scholars like Bernard and Seller who did not correspond with Cuper directly. His merits as a scholar were thus at least in part based on his capacity to manage his correspondence network and to strategically involve diplomats in his search for antiquities. Of course there were other factors that influenced his overall recognition as a noteworthy scholar, such as the books he published early in his career. On the topic of Palmyra, however, he established a reputation solely as a result of his private correspondence with diplomats who were well disposed towards him. This reputation extended well beyond the confines of his network and into the Republic of Letters at large. A

Appendix—Core Correspondents of Cuper

Correspondent (City)	Approximate Number of Letters Exchanged with Cuper
Theodorus Janssonius van Almeloveen (Harderwijk)	84
Jacques de Barry (Amsterdam)	145?
Pierre Bayle (Rotterdam)	35
Jacques Bernard de Beauval (Rotterdam)	35
Jean-Paul Bignon (Paris)	104
Nicolas Le Bon (?)	40
Louis Bourguet (?)	50
Johannes Braun (Nijmegen, Groningen)	61
Henrik Brenkman (Florence, Rome, The Hague)	36
Pieter Burman (Utrecht, Leiden)	96
L. F. Christyn (Brussels)	56
Jean Le Clerc (Amsterdam)	59
Johannes Columbus (Uppsala)	30
Jacob Colyer (Constantinople)	603 (pages)
Hendrik Copes (Den Bosch, Cologne, Nijmegen, Rome)	127?
Wilhelm Coutier (Nijmegen, Harderwijk, Deventer, Franeker)	44
Mathurin Veyssiere de la Croze (Paris, Berlin)	115?
Antonius van Dale (Haarlem)	33
Raphael Fabretti (Rome)	33
Justus Fontanus (Rome)	35
Antoine Galland (Caen, Paris)	118
Jacques Gallé (Kampen)	39
Johannes Georgius Graevius (Utrecht)	249
Nicolaas Gürtler (Franeker)	88
Nicolaas Heinsius (Vianen, The Hague)	68

Johannes Heyman (Smyrna)	46
Daniel Jan de Hoche pied (Smyrna)	74
Pierre Daniel Huet (Avranches, Paris)	150?
Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz (Wolfenbüttel)	47
Jobus Ludolphus (Frankfurt, The Hague)	53?
Antonio Magliabechi (Florence)	35
David Martin (Utrecht)	46
Claude Nicaise (Dijon, Paris)	74
Joannes Ortwinus (Delft, Zutphen, Deventer)	150?
Conte Passionei (?)	47
Adriaan Reland (Utrecht)	144?
Jacobus Rhenferd (Franeker)	35
Christiaan Constantijn Rumpf (Stockholm)	2 (volumes)
Theodorus Ryckius (Leiden)	34
Johann Jacob Scheuchzer (Tiguri)	84
Johannes Smetius (Nijmegen)	56
Hieronymus Guilielmus Snabelius (Heemstede, Deventer, Bremen)	40
Ezechiël Spanheim (Berlin, Paris, London, Cologne, Utrecht)	67
Friedrich Spanheim (Leiden)	32
Otto Sperling (Hamburg, Kopenhagen)	120
Franciscus Strijcker (Venice)	66?
Petrus Valckenier (The Hague, Zürich)	41
Paulus Voet van Winssen (Utrecht)	43
Nicolaes Witsen (Amsterdam)	(at least) 50