



K O N I N K L I J K E N E D E R L A N D S E
A K A D E M I E V A N W E T E N S C H A P P E N

**Remise du prix Descartes Huygens 2010
au Professeur Willem Frijhoff**

KNAW, Amsterdam, 11 avril 2011, 16h45

(Accueil-réception à 16h)

Mister Président,

Dear distinguished members of the Academy,

Dear Professor Frijhoff,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to congratulate you for this well-deserved award in the prestigious premises of the Royal Academy (KNAW) for this seventeenth Descartes-Huygens award ceremony. The Descartes-Huygensprijs or Prix Descartes-Huygens was established in 1995 by the French and Dutch governments to reward scholars from both nations alternatively in the fields of mathematics, life sciences, sciences of matter and of the universe and, this year, in human and social sciences. As you know, this prize is each year granted to an internationally renown scholar whose research, publications and teaching is deemed particularly important to the strengthening of Franco-Dutch relations : your career and your publications, dear Professor Frijhoff, which I will talk now about are a perfect illustration of this achievement.

Born in Zutphen and educated in Utrecht, you went to Paris at age 24. There you followed seminars at the Sorbonne, at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, and at the Ecoles des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. Ever since you have been closely involved with France, speaking at prestigious conferences and collaborating with its most renown historians such as, for example, Dominique Julia, Roger Chartier, Jean Delumeau, Robert Muchembled, and Michel Vovelle.

All this while pursuing a career of excellence in your own country after graduating with a doctoral degree from Tilburg Universiteit. You have taught and researched extensively first in that institution for a couple of years and then at Erasmus Universteit in Rotterdam. You are now

emeritus professor at Rotterdam and guest professor at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. In 1990 you were elected member of this distinguished academy. You are truly and deservedly a scholar with a high reputation both at home and internationally.

You have published extensively in the fields of cultural history, religious anthropology, and the history of education. Your work spans many topics and many areas since you have published on early modern Europe and early America. Additionally you have published articles and books in Dutch, French, German, and English. Among your best-known books, as an author or editor, let me mention the multi-volume work *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective ; Lieux de Mémoire et Identités Nationales, La France et les Pays-Bas ; Prophètes et sorciers dans les Pays-Bas (XVI-XVIIe) ; et La société néerlandaise et ses gradués, 1575-1814.*

The interest of your sophisticated work built on a thorough knowledge of sources and bibliographies lies in the fact that it encompasses various fields (religious history, history of education, and history of social relations) and it crosses geographic boundaries. Your research truly helps us better probe the cultural foundations of North-Western Europe.

But this prize does not just reward past career though. Quite the contrary. It is also awarded for ongoing and future research. At the moment you are involved in three major and ambitious projects: a comparative study of France and the Netherlands from the perspective of religious tolerance; a study of the ties between religious identity and social and religious coexistence, and an edited volume on Franco-Dutch relations since the early modern era. In all those projects France is involved and this award will allow you not only to continue this great collaborative work but also to conduct research in the French archives and libraries.

Let me conclude by wish you all the success you deserve in your future endeavours. This award will no doubt allow you to cultivate and expand this fruitful collaboration. This is why I with great pleasure join this academy and the world of international scholarship today in paying tribute to your work before your family, friends, and colleagues; please accept my most sincere congratulations.