

# *Lipsius – Lapsius?* The Flemish Humanist Justus Lipsius in Early Modern Estland and Livland

Author: Kristi Viiding

This article deals with the relations between the early modern Low Countries, Estland and Livland in the years 1590–1700, based on how people related to the famous Flemish humanist, philosopher, and philologist Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) through his books and ideas.

The attitude towards Lipsius in early modern Estland and Livland ranged from flattery (a personal invitation to Livland, the promise to build a golden monument to Lipsius in Riga) and recognition (the use of Lipsius' books on travel advice and the theory of politics in Tartu Academy) to contempt and warnings in the spirit of orthodox Protestantism (Lipsius as an apostate, a traitor, but also a symbol of the general moral decline of the Low Countries). Personal contacts with Lipsius were rare. They were only in the form of correspondence (between 1591 and 1606 with Paul Oderborn and David Hilchen), not face-to-face meetings. Contacts with him occurred mainly in Livland and Courland, which remained under the influence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Such contacts were partly formed during the 'Niederlandisierung' that took place in the book culture of this region. The decisive preparatory step for this process was the invitation of the first Livonian printer Claes Mollin from Antwerp to Riga (1588) and the exclusive privilege to import books to Riga in 1592.

The main way to learn about Lipsius' ideas was through his books. Private libraries in Estland, Livland, and Courland were the first to acquire works by Lipsius. It was not until the middle of the 17th century that the libraries of academic institutions also began acquiring them. His *Letters*, *Six Books on Politics*, and *Two Books on Constancy* were his canonical books, which were widely read and used in teaching activities, including in making entries in alba amicorum and florilegia. Very few Livonians, on the other hand, were interested in his antiquarian, philological and other philosophical works on antiquity. The Latin idiom that Lipsius developed and promoted (Lipsianism) was only exceptionally cultivated in Livland. Lipsius did not inspire anyone in Livland to publish and translate his works.