

Hans Ankum and the SIHDA

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Waarde collegas en beste vrienden en familie van Hans Ankum. Omdat nederlands niet mijn moedertaal is, maar ook omdat enkelen vrienden van Hans die hier aanwezig zijn geen nederlands spreken, zal ik in het engels verder gaan.

As I just said it, I will continue in English, even though it was not Hans' favourite language, but I hope that this will not be considered as a too harsh on him? Occasionally, he spoke English himself, even at the SIHDA: to my knowledge, he did so at least In Oxford 1993 and New Orleans 1995.

Even though I can understand why I was asked to speak about Hans Ankum and the SIHDA, I wish to insist on how much I feel honoured. I also have to confess that I don't find it an easy thing to do, especially here in Amsterdam, where so many of you know him much better than I do! Anyway, I'll do my best and try to be as accurate as possible.

Because Hans Ankum wasn't a member of the SIHDA since it's beginning, I need to start with a short explanation of what the SIHDA was before Hans Ankum's arrival.

1. The SIHDA before Hans Ankum

Fernand De Visscher founded this society in 1941, when Hans Ankum was only 11 years old and still at school in Zaandam. De Visscher invited his colleagues to attend the first meeting on Antiquity Law at the Fondation Universitaire in Brussels, during the winter 1941/1942. Fernand De Visscher was born in Ghent in 1885, where he studied law and became professor of Roman Law until 1930, when his university started teaching only in Dutch, what he refused to do.

He spent the first World War outside of Belgium (first in Oxford and then in France). He had the experience of how much damage wars do to research and international relationships between scholars. So, when the second World War was devastating universities again, he just couldn't accept it without trying something. This is why he invited his Belgian colleagues to meet at the Fondation Universitaire in Brussels, to discuss about Antiquity Law. These scholars called their society "Société d'Histoire des Droits de l'Antiquité". And these meetings went on during the rest of the war... until 1945, when Fernand De Visscher finally invited foreign colleagues to join those meetings in Brussels.

The first international meeting took place in December 1945, with the participation of some French scholars, whose names are: Levy-Bruhl, Le Bras, Petot and Gaudemet, some English and Swiss colleagues, as well as Julius van Oven from the Netherlands. All the other participants were Belgians.

The second international meeting was held in September 1947 and from then on, almost all meetings were organized every year in September.

Until the Sixth international session, all meetings were held in Brussels. Starting from 1952 on, the international sessions started to change venue and travelled around Europe and the World.

After Florence, Barcelona, Nancy and Brussels again, the Société d'Histoire des Droits de l'Antiquité came for the first time to the Netherlands. It was Julius van Oven, together with Henk Hoetink and Robert Feenstra, who invited the colleagues in Leiden in 1956. This was the 11th international session of the Société and also the first of a young assistant of Henk Hoetink, who was just back from his two years stay in Paris: Hans Ankum. This was probably his first meeting with Vincenzo Arangio Ruiz, Max Kaser, and of course Fernand De Visscher to name only a few of the great scholars who attended this meeting. If my information is right, it seems that after this first experience, he came back to the SIHDA only in 1967.

In the meantime, many things had happened. Of course, the international sessions went on, going to Oxford ('57) again, to Trieste ('58), to Freiburg/Breisgau and Basel('59), to Dijon ('60), even to Split in former Yugoslavia ('61), then to Torino ('62) and back to Brussels in 1963.

Brussels 1963 was also Fernand De Visscher's last participation at the conference he founded more than 20 years earlier. In Scotland in 1964, he was already too ill to travel and he died before the twentieth international session of Paris, in 1965.

De Visscher's death was a serious problem, as he was very much the personification of the society he created. He had not appointed a successor and eventually, several members of the SIHDA had the feeling that their time had come... But somehow, Jean Gaudemet managed to avoid a fight for De Visscher's succession. He imagined to replace De Visscher by a committee of directors (in French: comité directeur), a committee of three people: the previous, the current and the future organiser of the SIHDA. With this comité directeur, the SIHDA has never had any other president than Fernand De Visscher. Of course, some participants, through their personal prestige, had a greater influence than others. The existence of the committee of directors did not completely extinguish the desire of some to run for potential president. It was still tempting to try to take power over this learned society without a president or a solid structure.

2. Hans Ankum's first active participation at the SIHDA

So, this is basically the situation of the SIHDA when Hans Ankum comes to the 22nd international session in Perugia 1967. He was then professor here in Amsterdam, after the death of Henk Hoetink. In Perugia, Ankum gave his first paper at a SIHDA.

He spoke in French on "*Utilitas causa receptum*", about the pragmatism of classical jurists. The conference attracted at least the interest of Guarino, Mayer-Maly and Villers, who intervened to ask questions or make remarks. This paper has also been published in the RIDA, the journal founded by Fernand De Visscher to publish the papers given at the SIHDA.

It seems that Ankum was convinced about the importance of this international society, as he immediately offered to invite it in Amsterdam two years later, in 1969.

He confirmed his invitation to Amsterdam together with Pieter Verdam, his colleague from the free university of Amsterdam, at the general assembly of the SIHDA (1968) organised in Fribourg (Switzerland) by another Dutch colleague, Felix Wubbe.

So, in 1969, Hans Ankum organised his first SIHDA together with Pieter Verdam. It was a great success! 200 participants from 24 different countries (including South Africa, USA, Argentina, Suriname, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Israel, Turkey, Sweden, Portugal... to name only some of the more "exotic" countries for those times). 200 participants but only 39 papers (the ratio in Edinburgh 2019 was 202 participants for 150 papers! This is also food for thought!). The introduction to the general theme was offered by Jean Gaudemet, certainly one of the major members of the SIHDA after Fernand De Visscher's disappearance.

3. Hans Ankum's fidelity to the SIHDA in numbers

From Vienna 1970, Hans Ankum attended almost every SIHDA and gave a paper almost every time. Usually, he chose to speak French, but occasionally he also spoke German, English or Italian, depending on where (or by whom) the conference was organised.

- He spoke German in Vienna 1970, Cologne, 1974, Salzburg 1988, Miskolc 1991, Vienna 1994 and Bochum 2005: 6 times.
- He spoke English in Oxford 1993 and New Orleans 1995: only twice if my counting is correct.
- He spoke Italian only twice too, in Ferrara 1989 and in Messina 1997... Again if my counting is right.
- So all the other times, Hans Ankum spoke French when he gave a paper at the SIHDA. Bordeaux 1971, Athens 1973, Oviedo 1975, Trieste

1976, Perugia 1977, Ankara 1978, Palermo 1979, Brussels 1980, Madrid 1981, Perpignan 1982, Cairo 1983, Athens 1984, Namur 1985, Stockholm 1986, San Sebastian 1987, Sevilla 1990, Brussels 1996, Madrid 1998, Antalya 2000, Rotterdam 2001, Clermont-Ferrand 2003, Brasil 2004, Komotini 2006, Catania 2007, Fribourg 2008, Kavala 2009, Barcelona 2010. I'm counting 27 papers in French. I confess that I did not count the last one, he gave in Krakow 2018, after 8 years without presenting a paper.

- I know from personal experience that Hans Ankum did not attend Exeter 1999, Liège 2011, Naples 2014 and Istanbul 2015. I was not able to retrace his presence in Dublin 1972.

Anyway, we're close to 40 papers, which must be a record. I can only imagine one other scholar who attended more SIHDA's than Hans Ankum, and that would be Felix Wubbe. Wubbe started earlier than Ankum and attended almost every SIHDA and wrote a report for the *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis*. But Wubbe did not speak so often. Actually, as I wrote it in his *Festschrift* for his 90th birthday, Wubbe's reports were very often interesting, because he was in the best possible position to notice how the SIHDA was evolving. Of course, the conferences were growing in numbers, but as I noticed it before, the number of papers was growing much quicker than the number of participants! And this is what Wubbe already wrote about the 34th SIHDA in Brussels 1980: "On y parle beaucoup, on y écoute peu": There is a lot of talk, little listening. Less and less people go to the SIHDA just to listen to others, like Wubbe did very often. More and more go only to talk, not to listen. Of course, it would be unfair to claim that Hans Ankum was one of them. He certainly was an attentive listener! And he probably felt that famous scholars had the duty to speak at the SIHDA...

4. Hans Ankum's position in the SIHDA

As I've said it already, after Fernand De Visscher, no one was entitled to be called president of the SIHDA. I would almost compare it to the *crimen of adfectatio regni*.

Nevertheless, it seems that basically, the SIHDA was still somehow in the hands of the Belgians who were still running the RIDA, the journal connected to the SIHDA and somehow the only permanent structure close to it, even if RIDA and SIHDA are certainly not the same thing. Among these Belgian colleagues, Aristide Théodoridès certainly was a prominent figure. In his report of the SIHDA in Namur 1985, Felix Wubbe calls Aristide Théodoridès the "gardian angel" of the SIHDA. But Hans Ankum becomes more and more active during the General Assemblies:

In Stockholm 1986, he pronounced the obituaries of Jean Macqueron et Kudret Ayiter.

In San Sebastian 1987, he pronounced the now traditional thanking speech of the gala dinner. And afterwards, he also wrote the complete report of the session of San Sebastian to be published in the RIDA.

In Salzbourg 1988, he chaired the General Assembly (probably for the first time) and wrote the RIDA report together with Jacques-Henri Michel. In his own report for the Tijdschrift, Felix Wubbe called Hans Ankum “une des forces motrices de la SIHDA” (one of the driving forces of the SIHDA).

In 1989 (RIDA 36), Hans Ankum also entered the scientific board of the RIDA, together with Giovanni Pugliese.

In Sevilla 1990, Hans Ankum chairs the General Aassembly again. And from there on, he would do so more and more often.

Only occasionally, someone else chaired the General Assembly, especially when he was absent, like in Exeter 1999, where David Pugsley replaced him.

So, from the '90 on, there is no doubt about the fact that Hans Ankum was the leader of the SIHDA. I wouldn't say president, for the reasons I already mentioned... And actually Hans Ankum himself didn't want to be called president of the SIHDA either. The only title – and it was more a function than a title – he would accept was “coordinator of the SIHDA”.

If you consider the fact that the board of directors (comité directeur) was still existing but never decided anything, where as he was de facto in charge of everything, the first idea that comes to our mind of Romanists, is the figure of Augustus of course. Augustus who managed to become king without abrogating the Republic...

5. Hans Ankum's interventions to improve the quality of the papers

Hans Ankum loved the SIHDA very much and wanted only the best for it. So, especially with the massification of the conference, he felt that something had to be done to make sure that the level would be or stay high. And he acted in this direction already some years before being in charge of the SIHDA. In his report about the SIHDA in Athens 1984, Roger Vigneron wrote that Hans Ankum made an important intervention at the General Assembly. He asked the participants to provide a source sheet and a summary for all people attending the conference. By doing this, they would improve very much the level of understanding of the audience. This level was improved little by little until the organisers finally managed to oblige the speakers to send an abstract of their paper before (or while) registering. Even if the system is not perfect, it is a serious improvement, compared to the past. Unfortunately, at our last conference in Edinburgh, the abstracts were only available on the internet and were not printed for the participants... I think that Hans Ankum would not have liked that idea either!

Hans Ankum could also be very strict about speakers speaking to fast in their mother tongue. How often have we heard him complain about this...? And of course, he was never too shy to say it directly to the speaker.

6. Hans and the extension of the SIHDA

In the times when Hans was in charge of the SIHDA, he always looked for new partnerships and destinations where it would be nice to organise a SIHDA. Starting from the '90s and until the SIHDA of 2015 in Istanbul, it was Hans who contacted the local organisers about the eventuality of a SIHDA in their university... And sometimes he came back to them many times to convince them to organise an international session. Sometimes, the waiting time could be rather long. E.g. we know that Hans spoke with Francesco Sitzia during the SIHDA in Cairo 1983, to convince him to organise a SIHDA in Sardinia... which he finally did in 2002, almost 20 years later. And this is only one of many examples, even if it might well be the longest waiting time to my knowledge. I remember that Pascal Pichonnaz asked for 5 or 6 years of time... and it was roughly the same for me.

7. Hans Ankum and the future of the SIHDA

The reason why I have been invited to speak today has certainly something to do with what happened during the SIHDA of Oxford in 2012. During the General Assembly there, Hans Ankum asked the audience to accept a new coordinator for the SIHDA, as he thought that it was about time to hand the Société De Visscher over to someone younger. His health was not at its best and he had not been able to attend the conference in Liège 2011. He surely didn't want the SIHDA to struggle like it did in 1965, when Fernand De Visscher was dead and did not appoint any successor. His love for the SIHDA included this act of generosity.

Of course, I wouldn't dare to say that the SIHDA is in good hands, but it sure looks healthy and this is without any doubt the result of Hans' doing.

Speaking of Hans' love for the SIHDA, many of us have heard Peline complain that in fact, Hans was long married with the SIHDA.

I guess it is fair to use this expression even if it is a bit awkward, because Peline must have known better.

Thank you, Hans! The SIHDA will never forget what you did for her!