

THE DUTCH

EAST INDIA
COMPANY

BOOK

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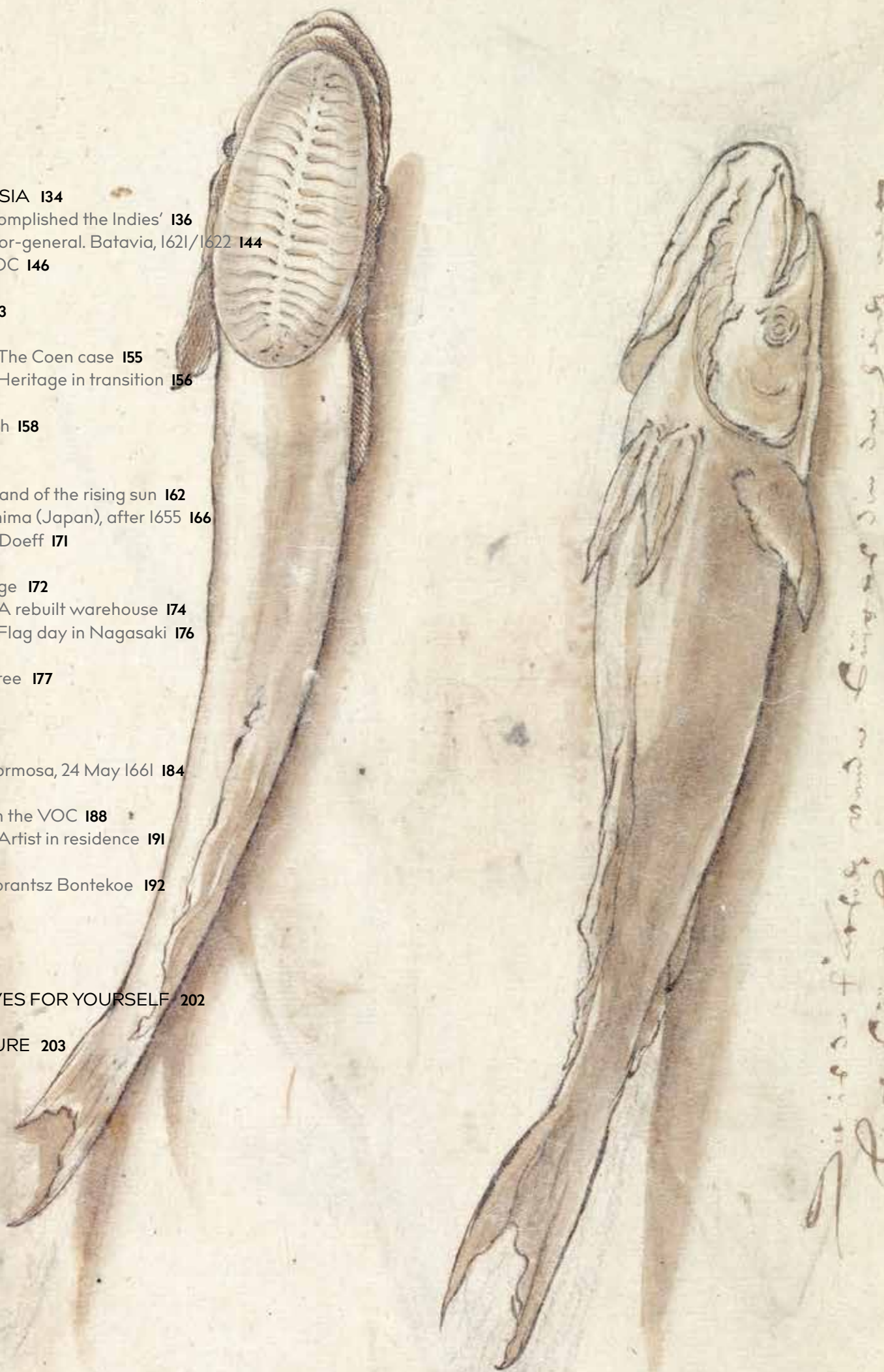
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INTRODUCTION

The influence and power of the VOC in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were unprecedented. Between 1602 and 1798 the Company sent almost a million Europeans to Asia on 4721 ships. In the period from 1500 to 1795 all other companies in Europe together transported 882,412 people. In comparison: The biggest competitor of the VOC, the British East India Company had a total of 2690 ships.

The archives of the VOC are as impressive as their statistics. These hold information about its business management as well as political, cultural, religious and social conditions in the areas where the VOC operated. Within the greater VOC chartered territory, information is frequently exchanged with and between the VOC posts. It is estimated that today about 25 million pages of historical VOC archive is being preserved. The VOC archive in the Dutch National Archives in The Hague covers its shelves for 1.2 kilometres and comprises documents that hail from the Dutch side of the organisation. Archives of the local posts abroad are held in Jakarta, Colombo, Chennai and Cape Town:

- Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta – 2.500 m
- National Archives of Sri Lanka, Colombo – 310 m
- Tamil Nadu Archives, Chennai, India, 64 m
- Kaapse Argiefbewaarplek/Western Cape Archives and Records Service, South Africa, Cape Town – 450 m

In addition there are VOC archives in France, namely in the Archives Nationales, the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Service Hydrographique de la Marine as well as in Britain in the National Library. An archive that came from the VOC offices in Malacca is kept in the Arkip Negara in Malaysia.

The archives of the local VOC offices abroad, for instance Cambodia, Burma, Vietnam, Taiwan and the Middle-East were lost. In the Netherlands much was destroyed up to the middle of the nineteenth century. For example in the years around 1821/22 approximately 10,000 binders from the Wages Office were sold as rags and old paper. A conservative estimate has it that at most a quarter of the original VOC archive has been preserved.

In the case of some Asian territories where there is a lack of local sources, the VOC archive is the major source of economic, political and social history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is for this reason that UNESCO included the complete VOC archives in the *Memory of the World Register* in 2003. Even today, its traces can be found in people, buildings and landscapes in many places on earth. To make this particular part of our heritage accessible, the VOC archive of The Hague was completely digitised and put on-line in 2015–2017. This has made this vital world heritage globally accessible. Digitisation provided an excellent opportunity to put the spotlights on the VOC archive. There is not only an exhibition about the VOC in 2017, but here is also a new publication, *The Dutch East India Company Book*.

Plenty of bookshelves are filled with books about the VOC. The adventures of the Dutch in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were apparently a rich source of inspiration. However, too little use has been made of the copious amounts of archive material kept in Nationaal Archief. The Book of the Dutch East India Company intends to put an end to that. As far as the Nationaal Archief is concerned, this is an opportunity to display all the major items from the VOC period, such as the trading permit from the shōgun of Japan from the year 1609, Abel Tasman's journal and the impressive collection of maps and charts by famous Dutch cartographers.

The journey through this book is like entering a VOC ship. The starting point is the Dutch Republic from where the voyage journeys through the VOC chartered territories. The hundreds of images provide a breath-taking view of the world of those days. The commentary takes the reader through the history of the Company. Numerous personal tales have been tied into this critical thread.

Two guest writers were invited to make a special contribution to this book. Ramsey Nasr (poet/author, actor and director, National Poet from 2009 to 2013 and Nelleke Noordervliet (author of many historical stories and columnist for the VPRO radio show OVT and the newspaper Trouw). They have adopted a character from a period, a moment and location based on historical fact and written a private narrative that transports the reader back to the past.

In addition about twenty other specialists from a wide range of disciplines have contributed short pieces on aspects of the VOC that have a particular significance for them.





Early Cartographers



EARLY COMPANIES



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HOW THEY 'STOLE FROM EACH OTHER THE SHOES FROM THEIR FEET AND THE MONEY FROM THEIR PURSES'

Shipping from the Netherlands to Asia or to India - as it was called in those days - started up in the latter years of the sixteenth century. The Netherlands were then the Republic of the United Netherlands. The Republic, consisting of Gelderland, Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Overijssel and Groningen, still was a young state in the years between 1579 till 1581 that arose from a rebellion against the common ruler of the country, the Spanish Philip II. At that time he was the most powerful monarch on earth, not only because of his many possessions in Europe but also because of Spain's colonies in the New World. The union of the monarchies of Spain and Portugal in 1580 added further colonies in Asia.

Philip II tried his utmost to regain territories lost in the Low Countries. The Republic therefore lost much territory in the early years, but around 1588 it started to look as though the Republic would survive. In spite of the war with Spain, the Republic prospered economically; especially the province of Holland and within it the city of Amsterdam. The strong position of Holland arose from the fact that it dominated trade and shipping to Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea. This powerful position in turn strengthened trade with England, France, Portugal and Spain.

<p. 10-11 **Chart of Europe and Northern Africa, by Jacobus Russus, 1533.**

On this 'portulan' (from the Latin word for port, *portus*) coasts and ports are depicted with incredible precision. At the end of the Middle Ages, skippers still navigated within sight of coasts and ports. Only in the course of the 16th century, ships started to venture out into the ocean. This required long distance charts.



Trade restrictions

Lisbon in Portugal played a significant role in the international mercantile shipping of the Republic. This came about because Lisbon had the best supply route and port for Asian commodities such as pepper and other costly spices. The union of the Portuguese crown with that of Spain threatened from time to time to turn into a general ban for Dutch ships to visit ports on the Iberian peninsula. However, it never came to full prohibition. It became nevertheless more serious when in 1591 the supply of pepper virtually fell completely into the hands of a small syndicate of European merchants. The supply in Lisbon stopped in 1592, which rather drove up the price of pepper and other spices. This price rise – combined with investment and intelligence partly supplied by Southern Dutch on the run for Philip II's troops – provided the impetus in the Republic to sail to Asia.

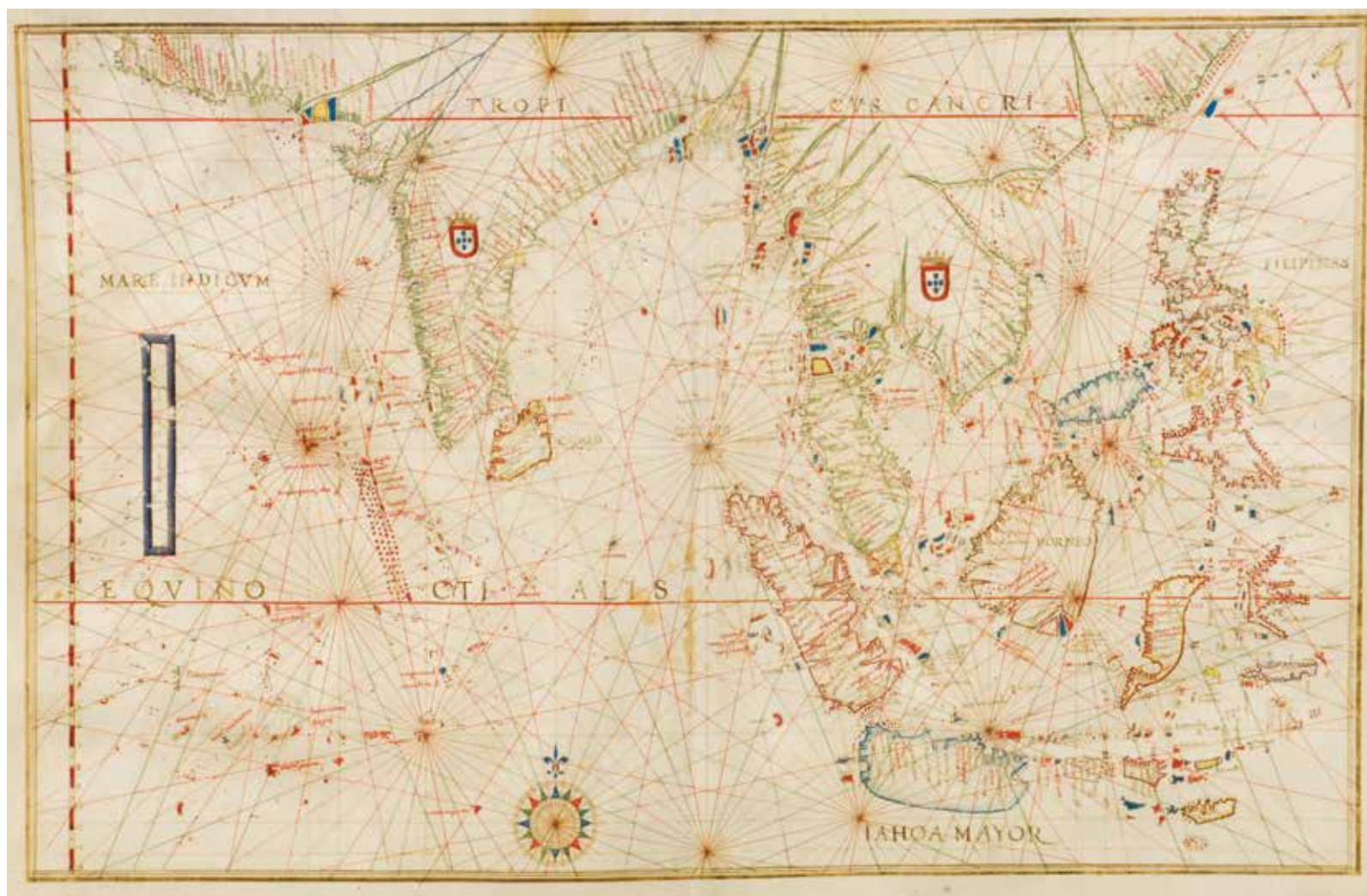
Forerunners of the VOC

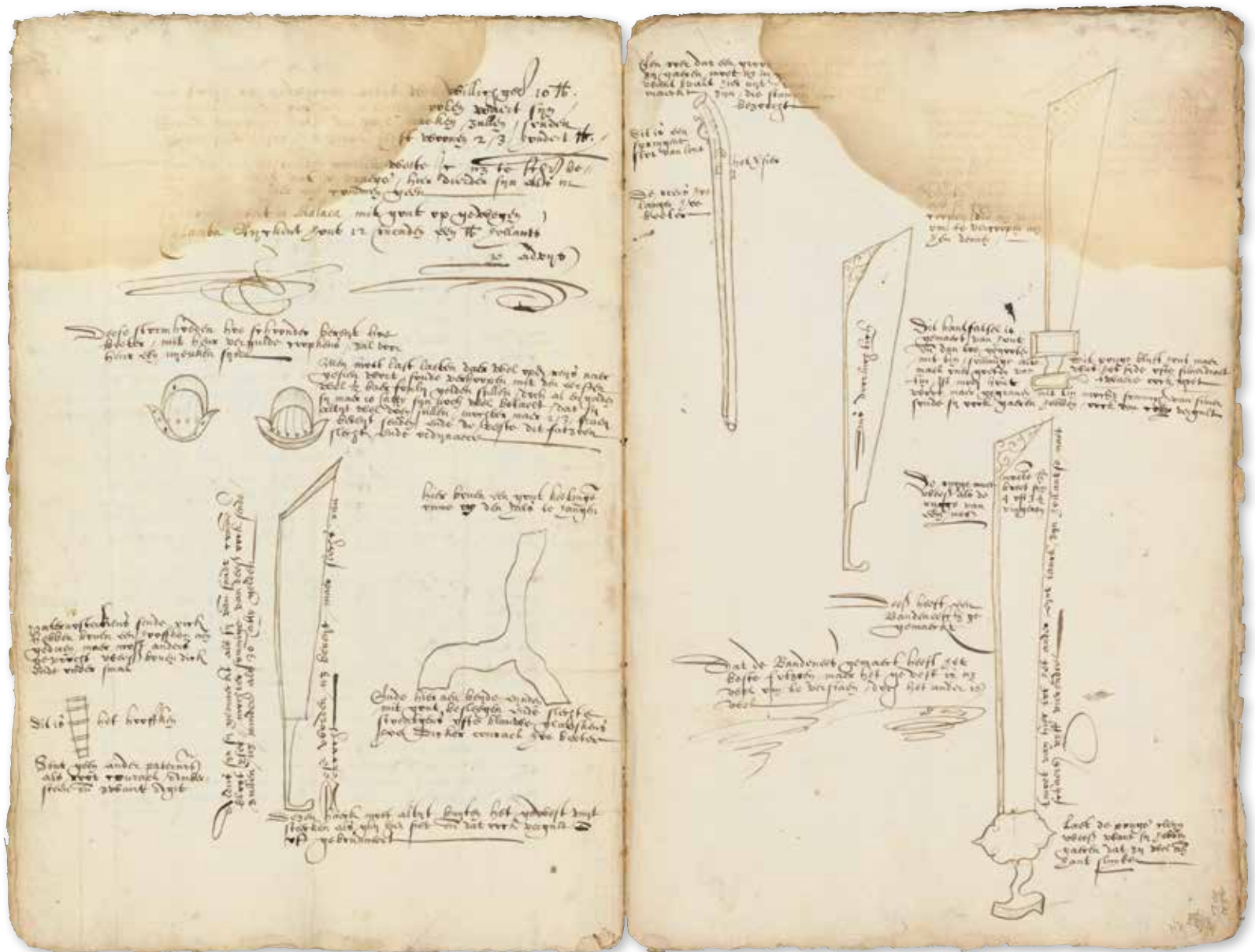
This situation created the Early Companies, the forerunners of the United East India Company, called Voorcompagniën in Dutch. They fitted out ships capable of undertaking sea voyages to Asia. It was characteristic for the Early Companies that these were one-off enterprises. Rich merchants and other investors put their money together and hired or purchased ships for a single expedition. They furnished the ships with weapons, provisions, merchandise and/or cash and mustered a crew. This involved considerable sums of money, for the journey out and homewards might take about two years. On return to the Republic the books were balanced, the ship was sold and staff was dismissed. If any profit was made, a new expedition could be set up. Then the whole cycle started again from the beginning.

Over the period from 1595 to 1602 sixty-five ships were sent off from Holland and Zeeland to Asia by eight or nine Early Companies. The first voyage was undertaken by the Compagnie van Verre ('Long-Distance Company'), four ships under the command of Cornelis de Houtman. He left the roads of Texel in April 1595 and after much misfortune he reached Bantam on Java in June 1596. Bantam was the most prominent port in the South-East Asian Islands that was not Portuguese. The route taken by De Houtman was the same course the Portuguese took: around the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa. In August 1597, De Houtman was back in the Republic with three of his four ships and 87 of his originally 210 hands strong crew. It had been an adventurous journey with many dying of sickness, disagreement on board and fighting with various Asian opponents, for instance in Bantam and further east along the Java coast. The destination, the spice islands in the east of the Indonesian archipelago, the Moluccas, was not reached. In hindsight, the most significant factor of the expedition was not the poor financial outcome but the fact that the possibility of Dutch mercantile trade with Asia had been demonstrated.

The Portuguese example, Bartolomeo Lasso, 1590.

Cartographic techniques improved quickly when the Portuguese began to sail the world's oceans more frequently in the 16th century. Bartolomeu Lasso is a prominent Portuguese map-maker (cartographer), who influenced the cartographers in the Dutch Republic.





Sea voyages

It was no wonder then that in 1598 Early Companies from Zeeland, Arnhem and Rotterdam also launched ships to try their luck. The second sea voyage was undertaken with eight ships under the command of Jacob van Neck of the *Oude Compagnie* ('Old Company') of Amsterdam, a successor to the *Compagnie van Verre*. This fleet did in fact land on the spice islands and brought back cloves, nutmeg and mace whilst it bought a very good quantity of pepper in Bantam. The Portuguese turned out to be able to stop the Dutch in a few places only, Asia was simply too vast. The Zeeland Early Companies of 1598 encountered more bad luck, including that caused by acts of violence from Aceh on the north coast of Sumatra in which Cornelis de Houtman, who was then in the service of Zeeland, met his end. However, the Rotterdam company, which was focused more on privateering and plundering Iberian targets than on trade, suffered an even worse fate. Of the nine ships that had passed round the southernmost point of South America through the Magellan Strait, only one returned to the Dutch Republic. This ship was under the command of Olivier van Noort, who, in doing so, became the first Dutchman who circumnavigated the world. So ships from Amsterdam sailed to the East in 1599 and 1600 and made a reasonable success of it. In 1601 the Zeelanders and the Amsterdam merchants combined their initiatives

which gave rise to the so-called united companies. Johan van Oldenbarnevelt the statesman played a significant part in this. These initiatives resulted in voyages of exploration which were concluded with a successful trading profit. The profit margin was not only determined by the beneficial results from trade. This was under considerable pressure anyway because of the competitive nature of the Dutch market. Taking abundantly laden Portuguese merchantmen as prizes also contributed to the good outcome. However, it also had become clear that the Portuguese had taken increasingly more defensive measures against the Dutch, including an expedition against those regions in the spice islands that had given a most hospitable welcome to the Dutch.

Products to barter with, September 1600.

Merchant Augustijn Stalpaert van der Wiele asks the directors of one of the Preceding Companies to send him prettily decorated weapons. Stalpaert is Deputy Merchant on the Banda islands at that time. These weapons would be used to trade for spices.

ANONYMOUS MERCHANT

Bantam, July 1595

I have never known of two brothers who were so different from one another as Cornelis and Frederik de Houtman. In Cornelis' opinion, he was the commander of the fleet. That was true, he was appointed by the financiers as the chief merchant, but he had to share the command with some other people. With me, for instance. And he did not like that. He was quarrelsome, was a rude boor, got into a fight if need be, but when it really came to it, he disappeared. How he rose to the top must have had a lot to do with his powerful family. His brother Frederik was, in contrast, much more modest, you could say he was a gentleman. He went as a volunteer, perhaps to restrain his brother, because he did like him. Well, that's how it goes, but he could see his brother's shortcoming better than anybody else. Frederik preferred to study the stars and when they had struck land he went to look for exotic plants, made drawings of the indigenous people and described their customs. He was a scholar. I liked him a lot.

It was a miracle that we managed to anchor in the roadstead of Bantam. It was an adventure so full of risks, but we have arrived at our destination. I have thanked God on my bare knees because it did not look like we would ever reach our destination. And many a poor soul failed to make it. Almost every day we had to shove a corpse overboard. Sometimes they were horribly mutilated by rats, which were as hungry as we were but could at least nibble at the dead bodies. But once we arrived at our destination the deprivations faded. That's how short the memory of people can be, man prefers to look ahead. We even have almost forgotten the explosive rows between De Houtman and Gerrit van Beuningen. Gerrit is still held prisoner on the *Hollandia* and has not walked on land in Bantam yet!

We might have guessed what we witnessed here because our guide was Jan Huygen van Linschoten, or anyway his *Itinerario or Reisbeschrijving* (Travel journal). Jan had obtained his knowledge from the Portuguese and supplemented it with his own observations. The Portuguese were well ahead of us in just about everything. Linschoten's descriptions were absolutely invaluable. He also wrote the following with regard to Bantam. Imagine: a wonderful bay, protected from the wind and the waves, a light breeze removed the clammy humid heat of the tropics, the town – yes, it's a town – surrounded by vegetation, bustling everywhere, the harbour teeming with junks and

A number of East Indiamen off the coast, by Hendrick Cornelisz. Vroom, circa 1600–1630.

Vroom is considered to be the founder of European maritime art.





proas or prows, small boats and here and there a large Portuguese ship, a carrack, with merchants on the quayside and sailors from all points of the compass, strangely attired according to their customs; coming from Arabia, from Malabar, China and Malaysia, it is a coming and going like a barrel full of colour and noise, I cannot tell the several languages apart, but there are many and it's all gibberish although you soon pick up a few words, Portuguese or Malay, and use them to say some simple things. We can also speak with gestures, which are the same all over the world. In Africa I had already seen a few outlandishly exotic tribes, mostly primitive and naked, and equipped with spears and feathers, but here – and I can't describe it any differently – here there is refinement. One can clearly see that trade takes place and that there is money. And poverty, but is there anywhere that knows no poverty? Poverty is everywhere. But alongside that poverty there is unexpected wealth being flaunted. And in the hinterland there was the pepper we had come for. I have never yet seen a pepper plant, let alone a garden full of them. The fragrance is redolent throughout the city and in the harbour, the pungent smell of spice and salted fish and a lot more I am not familiar with. It excites me to be here. We are on the eve of great things. We, just a handful of Dutchmen.

But look, there's Cornelis de Houtman. I will have to join his entourage. We are going to the Shahbandar, let's say he represents the King. I am not quite sure how things are run here. Cornelis appears to have drunk quite a bit to gain courage, his head is red and his tongue gets twisted when he orders the launch to come closer. He looks ridiculous for this hot country where everybody walks around in thin clothes, robes, wide pants and all quite airy. He had these clothes made back in the Netherlands. Velvet, satin and starched baize, a collar of immediately faded lace, ruffled sleeves and, darn it: a ludicrous and old fashioned cod-piece underlining his masculinity. His hair is stuck flat on his sweating skull. A bugler precedes him while a person is holding a type of large fan above his head as a token of his power. It made no sense. There he is, standing in his launch. He stumbles onto shore, a bold wave of sea water rolls over his expensive shoes. A mediator has arranged a meeting with the Bantam authorities and they are waiting for us. A few pikemen and two lancers are attending De Houtman, there are also a few soldiers each holding a pistol 'in case an exchange of fire is necessary' Cornelis said. Like an angry wild boar he trots towards the native delegation and states his mission. Pepper. He wants it here and now.

'The pepper is looking beautiful', the Shahbandar says, 'we have an abundant harvest. So the price will please you.' That sounds courteous. But De Houtman has no time for good manners. He laughs. 'You'd better show me your pepper harvest first.' I can see his brother gesturing to Cornelis to be more polite, but he ignores Frederik's hand. He stands right in front of the small and elegant Shahbandar and addresses him in a loud voice as if he thinks that that the Shahbandar can understand his language. I don't know whether the interpreter translates Houtman's words accurately,



DETAIL OF W. LANGEWEGH'S BANTAM, 1681



DE EERSTE O. I. VAARDERS OP DE REEDE VAN BANTAM.

but the other party is sufficiently able to make out what is said from his tone and demeanour. 'And what is the price you are thinking of? You should be glad that we are willing to pay for that leftover pepper.' And so he carries on. Is this the way we want to be known? I exchange some startled looks with Frederik. Is this the way we will deal in future with the indigenous people? It wouldn't be clever from a trading point of view and is shameful from a Christian one. What can they think of us? That we all are the same as our commanders?

Nelleke Noordervliet

Educational plate titled The first E. I. ships on the Bantam roads.

On this educational plate we can see Cornelis de Houtman and his men setting foot ashore on Bantam. They are received by the local ruler. In the background we see the galleons *Mauritius* (skipper Jan Jansz. Molenaar) and *Hollandia* (skipper Jan Dignumsz. van Kwadijk). The smaller vessel *Amsterdam* (skipper Jan Jacobsz. Schellinger) and the pinace or yacht *het Duijken* (skipper Simon Lambrechtsz. Mau). A servant is holding an umbrella above the ruler's head, standing under the coconut trees. The Dutchmen have just stepped out of their longboat, a second one is approaching from the left. To the left and right we see native people with three small boats.



The end of the Early Companies, January 24th 1602.

At the insistence of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, grand pensionary of the province of Holland, the directors of the different Early Companies signed a treaty together. This stated that they agree to merge into one company after five years of growing competition. This puts an end to the Early Companies, the United Company was to be the future.

Portrait of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, by Michiel Jansz. Van Mierevelt, circa 1616.



Johan van Oldenbarnevelt and the Dutch East India Company

The creation of the VOC may for a large part be attributed to Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. He managed to combine the ambition to expand overseas trade with the fight against Spain and emerged as the victor. After the death of William of Orange in 1584, Van Oldenbarnevelt had become one of the most prominent characters, not only as the leader of the province of Holland but soon of the new Republic as well. This Republic was a structure in which seven provinces (albeit more or less under the guidance of Holland) possessed their own sovereignty. They debated war, peace and international relations in a common chamber, the States-General.

Even though the Dutch had 'abdicated' their king in 1581 ('The Act of Abjuration' was its proof in writing), the Spanish king refused to give up his authority over the northern provinces.

The Portuguese were the supreme masters of international trade and shipping. Lisbon was the most prominent European supply port of Asian merchandise. In addition the supply of pepper fell into the hands of a small syndicate of European merchants. The Dutch merchants were in danger of missing the opportunities. The Republic's chances of sailing to Asia did turn round mostly because of the capital and intelligence that the Southern Dutch brought with them to Holland, on the run for Philip II. Van Oldenbarnevelt convinced the merchants to put their strengths together, not only for economic reasons but also the hamper Spain.

Founding the VOC in 1602 urgently necessitated the protection of the merchant fleet so they could sail the seas undisturbed. In the early years of the seventeenth century the warring parties of Spain and the Republic reached a kind of stalemate. Forced by financial troubles, the king was keen on peace negotiations but opinion was divided in the Republic. The advocates for continuing the war and their opponents gradually became personified by Prince Maurice and the grand pensionary (a kind of state attorney or prime minister) Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. The Twelve Years' Truce, agreed upon in 1609, was therefore a victory for Van Oldenbarnevelt, who put the priority on trade rather than on war. The war was suspended for twelve years. During this time the Republic was recognised as an independent sovereign state. Mercantile expeditions outside of Europe had to be officially sanctioned by Philip II, but this right was nevertheless granted to the Dutch in a hidden clause. The Twelve Years' Truce, the free trade to Asia and the international acknowledgement of the Republic as a sovereign state may, without any reservation, all be attributed to Van Oldenbarnevelt.



EN ROUTE

Willem Barentsz

The shortest way to the East: that was the goal of the Dutch explorers in their quest for the northern passage to Asia. In 1596, two ships left from Amsterdam. Jan Cornelisz. Rijp was the captain on one of them, the other was under the command of Jacob van Heemskerck. Willem Barentsz had the overall command over the expedition.

Once they arrive in northern waters, the ships soon lost their bearings between the ice floes. Rijp decided to return to Amsterdam, but Van Heemskerck and Barentsz carried on. When their ship became stuck in the ice north of modern-day Russia near Nova Zembla, Willem Barentsz and his men built a hut where they spent the winter from October 1596 to May 1597

in inhuman conditions. They then sailed to the northern port of Kola in two open launches to return to Amsterdam in a merchantman. Barentsz died on the journey home. The hut on Nova Zembla was given the name: *Het Behouden Huis* ('the Saved House').

One of the survivors, Gerrit de Veer, wrote a book about their adventures upon his safe return. Almost all existing knowledge about the overwintering expedition on Nova Zembla is based on his book. It is due to this story, which after its publication quickly became a bestselling book, that the barren voyage to Nova Zembla became a significant event in our national history.



Educational plate titled *Het behouden huis*, covering the overwintering on Nova Zembla, drawn by Johan Isings, 1950.

WILLEM BARENTSZ, SHIP'S MASTER

Nova Zembla,
the night of 10 to 11 September 1596

Willem Barentsz was standing on the forecastle of his ship. The clouds were down and hanging as a low ceiling of grey parcels above him. The rest of the crew were in their broken cabins. But he could not sleep. He stared at the dark-blue sky. Big columns of warm moist air escaped from his mouth. For a moment, the polar cold did not seem to hold him in its grip. 'Right now the nights are not so bad' he thought, 'but it won't be long before the months of unbroken darkness will kill any sense of life'.

The decision had been swishing round his head for days, like an unwanted messenger he had sent back every time, back into his thoughts and hoping, praying, against his certain knowledge.

That groaning... He found that the worst thing of all, that terrifying groaning of the ship. It had been going on continuously now for ten days. And always there was the north-easterly wind pressing the stern of the ship so hard against the ice that the elevated structure of the after-castle was completely destroyed. The ice had already bored a hole in the bow as if the ship were a toy made of birch bark. Every now and then, the entire ship was pushed up by five feet making such a noise that it seemed to explode, then again the ship heeled over far too much. That's how stuck they were between the ridges of the ice.

There were moments when he was convinced: that this was it. By a miracle of God, the caulking had held out up to then, the seams had not opened. But Barentsz realised: it was only the outer planking that kept the hull together. When the transom was shattered the day before yesterday, they had just stood there and watched. Slowly a monstrous creature had begun to devour them.

Over the last few days they had stripped the ship down and had carried the old foresails onto the ice. Now that the cathead was broken, now that the rations, the boat, the derrick, the gun powder, the shot, the muskets and most of the provisions were on the ice, everybody knew where they stood: on a carcass. The reminder of a ship. No-one dared to say it.

Barentsz knew he had only a few hours to go before he had to give the orders his crew expected and feared. On earlier scouting trips they had already found a fresh water river and reindeer tracks. It was not a question of whether it was possible. There was no choice and thus no question. The game was over when they had entered this bay a few weeks ago. It then became a matter of stamping one's feet in the cold. Even the small boat could not be moved from this white world.

Strange, Barentsz had thought, how colours change at night. In the blue twilight the blueness of the ice floes came to the fore: To him, the spiky colossus seemed to give out a light, leaking a purple flame.

Perhaps this was no longer outside. Perhaps they had been swallowed wholesale with ship and all and found themselves in the innards of winter.

No, he would not issue his orders tomorrow. There was no need for them. Barentsz was going to organise a new expedition: they were going to search for driftwood and carry that to the ice river. Some things took long to get used to, like the long night. Every man for himself could then in silence get used to whatever Barentsz did not dare to speak the name of: in preparation he chewed over the word *overwintering*.

He touched his nose. It had suddenly grown icily cold. He violently rubbed it a few times and sunk deeply into his collar. The way he stood there he did not seem to be overly emotional. There was no point in that. This was no time or place for emotions. Neither was it sorrow that befell Barentsz now. It was a state of mind which had given up any hope of resistance. For the first time in his life his spirit seemed to overlap with the landscape. Here, in this place where there were no trees, no people, no sound other than the ice breaking up and the wind, any humanity was wiped out.

He had been promised 25,000 guilders if he could find the passage. The Master burst out laughing without making any sound. In this world, in this limitless nothingness where any imagining of supreme desolation failed, where there were no people, no painters or cartographers, no kings or princes or stadtholders, no spouses and no merchants and no children, the thought of money was utterly absurd. He could easily fall through the ice here with all the gold treasure of the world and nobody would notice – not now, not here and not at home. This world had been created for the absent.

He was at peace with that, in the end – a peace that bore the marks of a fatal defeat. It was at the same time the greatest task for the coming months: to instil and preserve something of that deathly peace into the hearts of his 16 travelling companions; to see for a time the circumstance that they were there all together as hope.

They knew of reports about sailors who had been stuck not just one but two years in the pack ice and they hadn't lost their minds. Barentsz shuddered. It was enough. He had come up against the black extremes of his imagination. He was not able to form any idea of what awaited them. Still, in a world without options one found solace in the only thing imaginable.

The Master softly rubbed his mitts over the groaning foc'sle of his ship as if he was stroking his dog.

There was no passage. Not this year.

He had the space and the time to embrace the adventure God had granted them.

Ramsey Nasr



Objects, such as shoes and tools, left in 1597 by the sailors who overwintered on Nova Zembla. These were found again after 300 years. The cane may have even been used by Willem Barentsz. himself. The shoes were soon replaced by wide wooden shoes that fit thick socks.

NIEUW AMSTERDAM OFTE NIEUW





IORX OPT' TEYLANT MAN

View on New Amsterdam,
by Johannes Vingboons.
Circa 1665.



EN ROUTE

Mauritius and the dodo

In the autumn of 1601, the squadron of the *Gelderland*, comprising three ships and two yachts, dropped their anchors off Mauritius. The most urgent reason for their stopover was to find a victualing station for replenishing supplies. On the way to Asia, fresh water and food had to be obtained. Mauritius looked very suitable because there was plenty to eat and to drink. It almost looked like paradise: indigenous birds – the rose-breasted cockatoo, the grey parrot, the blue dove and the dodo. The dodo hardly had any natural enemies and was not timid. The crew of the *Gelderland* found it easy to catch. But the meat was not very edible. Perhaps that is what gave rise to one of the oldest Dutch names for the dodo, the ‘*walchvogel*’, or the ‘*nauseting bird*’. The crew called it ‘*griffeendt*’ or ‘*kermisgans*’ – the fun fair goose, after the poultry fattened for the Amsterdam fair. In addition the men ate a lot of turtles and other birds and fish. Many of these birds were illustrated in the logbook of the *Gelderland*. That is fortunate because these are now extinct. To their amazement the crew also ran into a Frenchman. This man who was a little confused but in good condition, was found naked on the beach after being left behind by a failed English expedition. They called him ‘*Francoy*’. He is the sole human being depicted in the logbook.

The dodo became extinct at the end of the seventeenth century. One of the latest reliable descriptions of the animal is found in the journal of the governor of Deshima, Japan. He wrote that the ship the *Jonge Prins* brought a dodo and a white hart to Japan in 1662 as gifts for the shōgun. The white hart was given to a local ruler but nothing more was written about the dodo after its arrival in Japan.

This makes the journal of the *Gelderland* a unique document. Most of the drawings were first sketched out in pencil after which it was drawn over in detail in ink. There were probably more than two draughtsmen. The charts and the coastal contours were probably from the hand of Joris Joostenszoon Laere and it is likely that he also drew the larger proportion of animal illustrations. A few drawings of the dodo were made by a less gifted artist. The depiction is not quite accurate, the legs look a little too stout, but still, they are remarkably good. Later images often depict the dodo as a thickset, ungainly bird, but modern research indicates that the slimmer shape, as seen in this logbook, is more accurate.

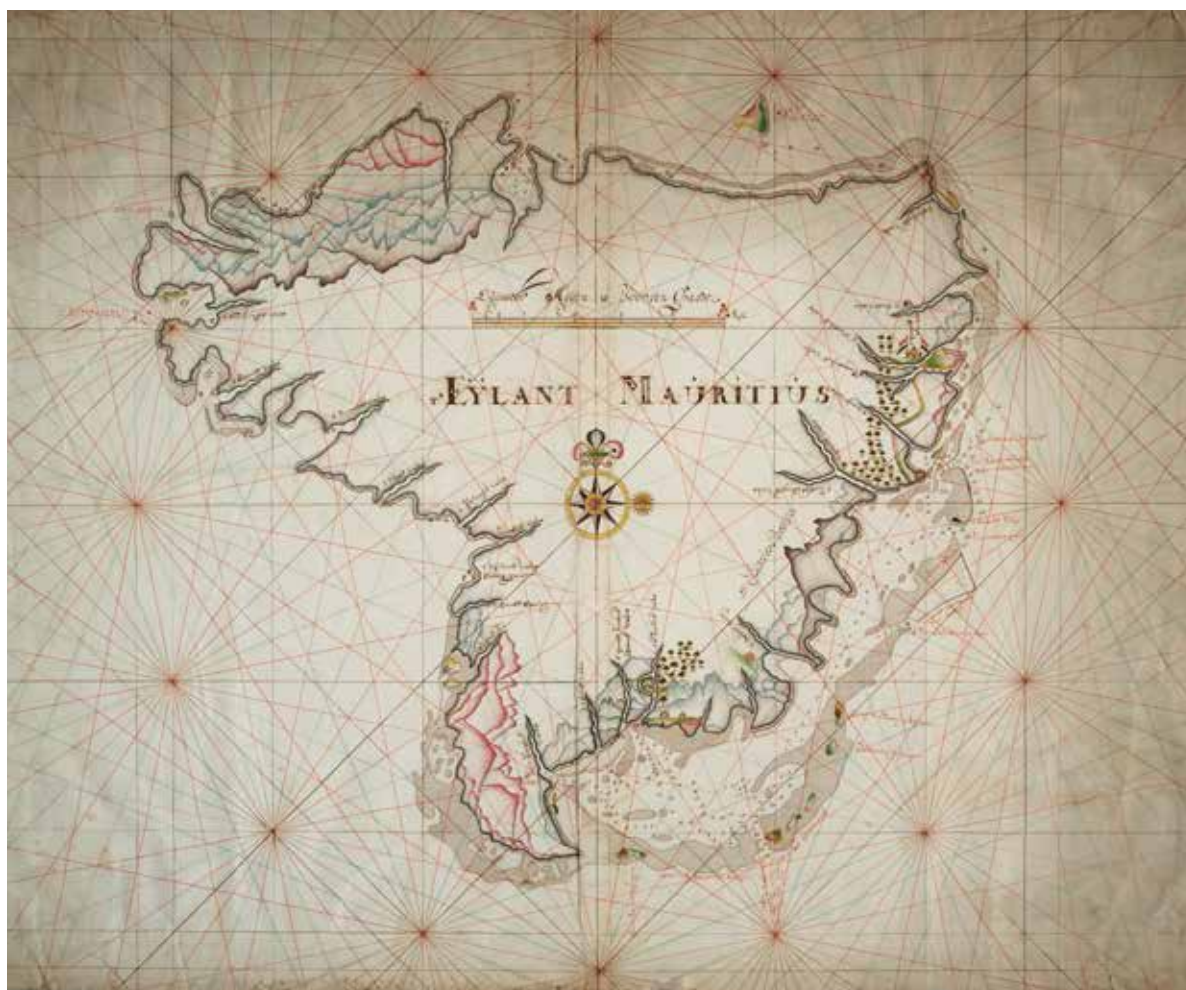


Reconstruction of a dodo.

The dodo was the first animal to become extinct due to mankind's intervention. This is probably the reason why its appearance and behaviour received so much attention throughout history. In *Naturalis* in the city of Leiden a modern reconstruction of a dodo can be seen. Contrary to the older models, the bird is depicted slimmer here.

Chart of the island of Mauritius, anonymous. 1700–1750.

Especially in the early days of Dutch shipping on Asia, Mauritius is an important victualing post. Admiral Wybrand van Warwijck names the island after *stadtholder* prince Maurice in 1598. In 1638 the Dutch set up a small colony there.





D'après le dessin de M. de la Roche, par lequel on voit
 que le corps de cet oiseau est très gros, et que sa
 tête est très petite, et que ses pieds sont très
 grands, et que son bec est très court, et que
 son plumage est très épais, et que son corps est
 très rond, et que sa queue est très petite, et que
 son cou est très court, et que son ventre est très

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The world of the Dutch East India Company

The United East India Company – the VOC and known worldwide as the Dutch East India Company – is still a household word in the Netherlands. The Company, sometimes called the first multinational in the world, played a significant part in our history. It had a monopoly for the Dutch, trading in a territory that covered more or less half the globe. This area reached from Cape of Good Hope in South Africa to the west coast of America and comprised not only the east coast of Africa but also the whole of Asia and Oceania. Moreover, the VOC was granted the privilege of making treaties with states lying within its trading charter, to construct fortresses and maintain armies and naval fleets and if necessary, wage war. The organisation that all of this required was without a doubt very impressive. The Company was the incentive for shipbuilding, the publication of maps and charts and the status of the Republic of the United Netherlands in the world.

To make this particular part of our heritage accessible, the VOC archive of The Hague was completely digitized and put on-line in 2015-2017. This has simultaneously made this vital world heritage globally accessible. Digitization provided an excellent opportunity to put the spotlight on the VOC archive. This book gives an impression of the treasures of the VOC that have been preserved. They show the achievements of our forebears and how the world was perceived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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