

The Seventeenth-century Dutch Travel Account and the
Production of Knowledge on Asia: A study of
Vervarelyke schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling

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Abstract

This thesis studies a seventeenth-century Dutch travel account titled *Vervarelyke schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* written by Frans Jansz. van der Heiden. The book was first published in 1675 and had numerous editions between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Van der Heiden was a Dutch East India Company sailor made his journey to India in 1661. His journey was an unlucky one: within few days of his departure from Batavia, the former principle trading settlement of the Dutch east India Company, their ship *Ter Schelling* encountered a terrible hurricane and subsequently the author and his shipmates got shipwrecked on the coast of Bay of Bengal. After endured so many plights they managed to reach an island of Bengal. But Van der Heiden and his shipmate's bad luck did not end there. In the course of the journey they had to join the Mughal army as conscripted soldiers and served the army for fifteen months. However, this fateful journey enabled Van der Heiden to visit some parts of eastern and north eastern India that is, Bengal, Assam and it's neighbouring regions. During his journey he experienced the local culture, religion and society. He also made a close observation of the Mughal army and warfare. Upon his return home Van der Heiden published his book based on his travel experience. The book was written in a popular style of the period which offers sensational description of his journey and practical and real information of the areas he visited. The book has so far been largely neglected by scholars. Some scholars discard the importance of the book terming it as fictitious and unreal. They argue that the book does not provide real, interiesing and new information on Asia. The thesis demonstrates that apart from its sensational description, *Vervarelyke schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* provides real, important and new information on Asia, particularly India, which can be used by the historians writing on these regions. The thesis shows that the book provides information on the Mughal army and Mughal warfare which very few European and even Asian sources could supply. Apart from army and warfare the book gives valuable information on the rural economy and life of 'subaltern' people of these regions which may offer a new perspective in studying the early modern history of India.

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Introduction

This thesis intends to study a seventeenth-century Dutch travelogue titled *Vervarelyke Schipbreuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling*, written by a Dutch sailor. The seventeenth century is important for the Dutch for many reasons. This century is considered the golden age of economic affluence. During this period the Dutch achieved considerable success in maritime trade. In 1602 the merchants of the Netherlands established a united company envisaged to extirpate competition among the merchants of different provinces of the Netherlands and to compete with the other maritime companies, which were engaged in trade in the Asian waters. The merchant leaders named the company as Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) or the United East India Company commonly known as the Dutch East India Company. The company was granted a monopoly by the States General of the Dutch Republic to perform trade in Asia.¹ Later, it would be seen that the Company had momentous inroads in world trade by dominating maritime trade for more than a century.

Besides the economy the Dutch attained significant achievements in art, culture and science. This was also the century when many Dutch people made their journey overseas, especially to Asia as Company (VOC) soldiers, sailors, merchants, serviceman and missionary. This stimulated the interaction between the Dutch and the Asians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During their stays in Asia they engaged with the local society, culture, customs, and religion and so on. Through their interaction with local society they earned considerable knowledge of Asiatic regions. Upon their return home they began to publish their experiences on Asia. Afterwards this travel literature received huge readership in the Netherlands and also in other parts of Europe.

The seventeenth-century published and unpublished Dutch travelogues were voluminous in number and varied in themes. It dealt with various themes such as navigation and geography, religion, commerce, culture, polity and so forth. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries these travelogues appeased the public thirst for knowing of other worlds. Apart from satisfying general readers in early-modern Europe, these later become one of the important sources for historians to reconstruct pre-colonial past of Asia. Historians have so far studied and used travel literature for historical writings. The historians like Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. van Kley have done a general study of the European travelogues. Roelof van Gelder and Dr. P.H. Pott have also

¹ For details see Femme S. Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company: Expansion and Decline* (Leiden: Walburg Pers, 2003), pp. 13-55

provided useful insights on this kind of work.² Van Gelder's book, *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur: Duitsers in de dienst van de VOC, 1600-1800* mainly deals with Germans who went to Asia to work as VOC servants and later wrote their accounts on the region.

However, one kind of travel literature— written in a popular writing style of the age provides practical experience, important information and sensational description of the adventure— is relatively neglected by historians and scholars. Although some of these travelogues have been studied by scholars, for instance Bontekoe's book, very few scholars have perceived the importance of the book which I am studying in this thesis. The historians Lach and Van Kley remark:

'Van der Heiden's tale may well be fictitious. The crew of the "Schelling" seems altogether too irresponsible, some of their adventures too unrealistic; the description of the island are so general, it could be anywhere, and there are some lapses and illogicalities in the story. *Fiction or fact, Van der Heiden's popular book contributed no new information about Asia.* [Emphasis added]³

This state of indifference and inattention towards this work tempted me to undertake the study of this book and pose the research question: Apart from partly sensational narrative, does *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* provide real and useful knowledge on Asia? Can this knowledge or information be used for historical writings? In this thesis I propose that the book produced real and important knowledge on Asia, which can be potentially used for historical writings.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter will introduce the book. It will also provide a brief biography of the author of the book: Fransz Jans van der Heiden. The second chapter will make an overview of the Dutch travel literature and try to categorize the travelogue into different genres. It also seeks to situate our present book into the larger canon of the seventeenth-century Dutch travel literature. The third chapter will investigate what knowledge or information the book provides on India. It will also attempt to weigh and interpret the information using secondary literature.

² See Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. van Kley, *Asia in the making of Europe: A Century of Adventure: Trade Missions and Literature*, vol. III, book - I (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993); See Roelof van Gelder, *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur: Duitsers in de dienst van de VOC, 1600-1800* (Nijmegen : Uitgeverij Sun, 1997; Dr. P.H. Pott, *Naar Wijder Horizon: Kaleidoscoop op ons beeld van de Buitenwereld* (The Hague: Mouton & Co 's-Gravenhage, 1962)

³ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the making of Europe*; vol. III, 1, p. 496

In this I have mainly used two kinds of sources: primary and secondary. Primary sources are comprised of different Dutch travelogues written in the seventeenth century. Secondary sources cover books, dissertations and journals published in English and Dutch.

The study admits its limitation too. It would be great if I could do a comparative study on this particular genre of literature. Rather this research is narrow and centered on a specific book especially due to time limitation.

Chapter one

Frans Jansz. van der Heiden and his *Vervarelyke schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling*: A brief history

Introduction

This chapter is a bid to introduce *Vervarlyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Terschelling* to the readers. In this chapter I will attempt to provide a brief picture of the book: what the book is about, when the book was published, how many editions has it and into how many languages it was translated that is publication history of the book, and how it was received by the European readers. I will make an endeavour to provide a brief biography of the author. The chapter also attempts to trace the use of the book by scholars.

A brief biography of the author and content of the book

Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling is a seventeenth-century Dutch travelogue authored by Frans Jansz. van der Heiden. Willem Kunst was the editor of second edition of the book. We have not much information about the author and editor of the second edition. Even the more recent editor of the book, C.E Warnsinck-Delprat, provides very scant, if not no, information about Van der Heiden and Willem Kunst. As far as we know Van der Heiden was a Dutch sailor. He was born in 1638 and died in 1681 in the Netherlands.⁴ Willem Kunst was a fellow sailor of Van der Heiden and one of the companions of his fateful journey.

The author's account recounts that Van der Heiden along with other sailors and merchants was boarded on a Dutch East India Company ship named Ter Schelling from Batavia, one of the prominent trading settlements of the Dutch East India Company in the Indonesian archipelago. The

⁴ Digitale Bibliographie Nederlandse Geschiedenis, can be accessed at <http://www.dbng.nl/show.asp?startRecord=1&maximumRecords=1&frmQuery=pica.ppn=070202559&sortKeys=http:&grouping=&stylesheet=longTitlePresentation.xslt&addHistory=&tab=tref>

ship was bounded to Hugli, the then chief factory of the Dutch trade in Bengal. Van der Heiden informs:

‘On 3rd September 1661 we departed from Batavia along with our four ships namely Ter Schelling, Wezop, Brouwershaven and Nieuwenhove towards our trading settlement in Bengal. I was boarded on the ship Ter Schelling which contained 85 sailors and assembled with 28 cannons and money such as *kopstukken* and *spiljateur*.’⁵

However, after several days of sailing the ship encountered a terrible hurricane along the coast of Bay of Bengal. The crews and captain made their onerous efforts to save the ship from shipwreck but having seen no avail a team of intrepid men on board made a tiny life raft with an ambition to reach the shore, which they indeed made. But their misfortune was recurring; began soon after their arrival of the island. Initially, Van der Heiden and his colleagues thought the island as a fishermen village. In their hallucination they saw some fishermen, their nets and also a few Dutch people walking along the shore. But when reached the island they identified it as a desolate land without food and drinking water. The weather was also exceedingly cold and they had almost no winter clothes with them. After weeks of terrible suffering they managed to reach a coastal Bengali village called Sondip, a southernmost part of present Bangladesh, with the help of some native fishermen. After which they made their journey to the Dutch factory in Dhaka and later planned to go to their destination— the Dutch factory in Hugli. However there was no redemption from the enduring plight; at the eleventh hour when all the arrangements were made for their Hugli trip, a *firman* arrived from the nabab of Bengal to the second man of the Dutch factory in Dhaka requesting to send those people for few months for his Assam campaign. Van der Heiden’s account reads as:

‘On sixteen days of our stay there, the second person [of the Dutch factory in Dhaka] hired a large vessel for us by which we all could easily go to Hugli, the principle trading centre of the Dutch East India Company in Bengal. After which we would get the Company ship for our further journey... But, as on the day, when we were supposed to leave, a letter arrived from the nabab, the chief captain of the field army of the Great

⁵ Frans Jansz. van der Heiden, *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling: Onder het landt van Bengale; verhalende desselfs verongelukken, en den gruwelijken hongers-noot van 32 schip-breukelingen op zekere onbewoont eilant, daer sy van 't wrak met een volt aenquamen als ook hoe sy van het selve eilant in Bengale landen, en voorts in 't velt-leger van den grooten Mogol, tot in het koningrijk van Assam landewaerts opgevoert zijn* (Utrecht: Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1944), p. 27

Mughals, by whom we are taxed... Thus our Hugli journey was cancelled... We complained the second man whether this could be averted.⁶

Nabab's order could not be averted. When Van der Heiden and other shipwreck men asked the second man of the Dutch factory in Dhaka whether they could turn down the nabab's request, the second man could not help the adrift poor men and replied them pessimistically saying if the nabab would summon Mr. Van den Broek, the governor of the Dutch trade in Bengal, to join his army he must had to abide by the nabab's order.⁷ Thus, alluded by the second man to respect the nabab's request, Van der Heiden along with his 25 Dutch companions joined the nabab's army grudgingly and spent about fifteen months with the Mughal army.

After providing service for the fifteen months for the army Van der Heiden and the other conscripted Dutch soldiers returned to the Dutch factory in Dhaka from where they subsequently went to Hugli sometime after April 1663. Van der Heiden spent about ten years in India and later made his journey to London and at last arrived in the Netherlands in 1673.⁸ On his return home, he decided to publish a book over his experience of the Mughal army and Bengal, Assam, and the other regions he had visited. It took two years for him to prepare the manuscript and arrangements for printing.

Publication history

The book was finally published in 1675 from Amsterdam by a *boekverkoper* or book seller Johannes van Someren. The ninety six pages book contains 13 illustrations. The cover page of the book is illustrated with a painting which shows a ship in the deep sea is about to capsize by high and turbulent waves and on the left bottom corner a picture of a sailor and on the right bottom corner a picture of a monster. All these depictions together make an image of danger, misery, bad luck and adventure a sea voyage involves. Other illustrations inside the book show Van der Heiden's adventure and experience during his voyage and visit to Bengal and its neighbouring regions. The illustrations also present a vivid picture of the war that he joined as a Mughal soldier. All the illustrations of the first version were drawn by D. Bosboom. The book was reprinted in the same

⁶ Van der Heiden, *Vernarelyke Schip-breuk*, pp. 102-3

⁷ Van der Heiden, *Vernarelyke Schip-breuk*, p. 103

⁸ Van der Heiden, *Vernarelyke Schip-breuk*, p. 133

year it was first published and was edited by Willem Kunst who added some extra information on Arakan, Bengal, Martavan and Tanassery which is enclosed as appendix. The book ran into at least four reprints between 1675 and 1700.



Figure 1: Cover and title page of the first edition of *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling*
 Courtesy of the Leiden University Library Special collection, the Netherlands.

After several years, in 1741-2, the book again appeared along with Jan Janszoon Struys' book under single cover titled as *Drie aanmerkeleyke en seer rampspoedige Reizen*.⁹ It was published from

⁹ See Janszoon Struys, *Drie aanmerkeleyke en seer rampspoedige reizen door Italiën, Griekenland, Lyfland, Moscovien, Tartaryen, Meden, Persien, Oostindien, Japan, en verscheiden andere gewesten. Waar in vertoont werden, behalven een nannkeurige en tot omstandige beschrijvinge der gemelde Landen, en 't geen tot haar natuur behoort, seer wonderlyke, en waarachtige toevallen den Autheur overgekomen door Schipbreuken, Plonderingen, Slavernye onder de Turken, en Persiaanen, zwaare Hongersnood, Pyniging, en andere ongemakken. Aangevangen anno 1647, en voor de derde of laatste Reis t' t' Huis gekomen 1673, begrypende zo in alles den tyd van 26 jaren. Nevens twee Brieven, particulierlyk verhandelende het overgaan van Astracan, en 't geene aldaar omtrent is voor gevallen; en daar in ook een verbaal der elenden, en zwaare ongemakken, uitgestaan by D. Butler, door hem zelfs geschreven uit Ispahan. Met verscheidene curieuse kopere Plaatens, door den Autheur zelf s na het leven getekent, verciert* (te Haarlem: Johannes Marshoorn, 1741-2)

Haarlem by bookseller Johannes Marshoorn. All the copies of the book, perhaps, was absorbed within four years of its publication, as in 1746 we find another edition. In 1755 the book had one more reprint. In 1865, J.H van Lennep in his edited travelogue *Op de zee* included *Vervarlyke Schip-breuk van het Oost-ndisch Jacht Terschelling* but with some editing works, particularly with the language: he changed the archaic spelling perhaps considering the expediency of the readers of his age. He also added several new illustrations which were not used in the previous editions. The book was published by Noothoven van Goor from Leiden.¹⁰ About one century later, *Vervarlyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-ndisch Jacht Ter schelling* was published in 1944 with an introduction by C.E. Warnsinck Delprat. She also added some new illustrations and notes for the readers. However, surprisingly, she dropped Willem Kunst's appendix.

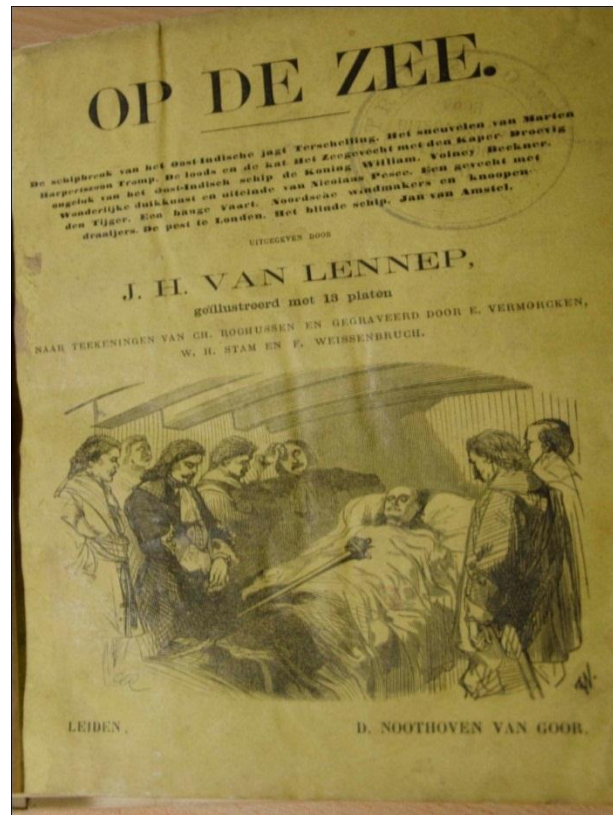
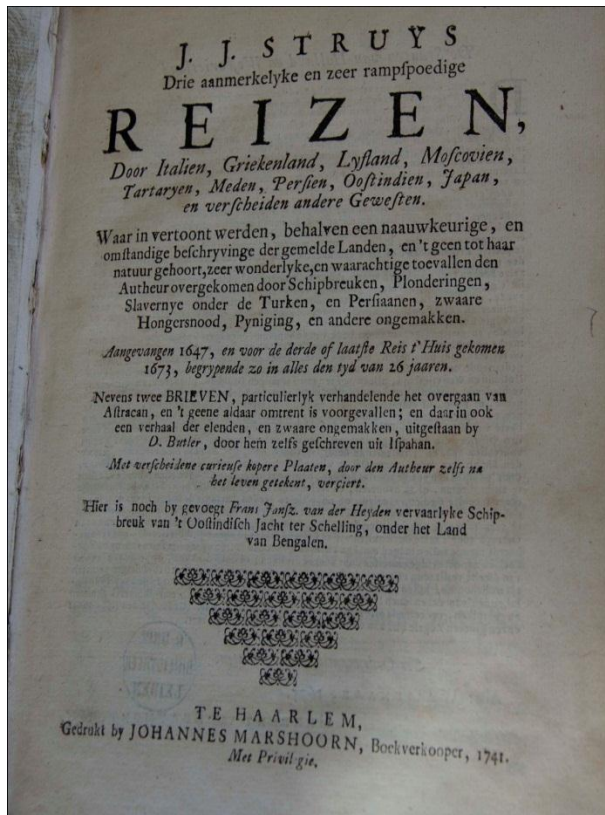


Figure: 1.1: Cover page of the book *Reizen* and *op de zee* in which *Vervarlyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* appeared
Courtesy of the Leiden University Library Special collection, the Netherlands.

¹⁰ See J.H. van Lennep, *Op de Zee: De schip-breuk van het Oost-Indische jacht Terschelling. Het sneuvelen van Marten Harpertszoon Tromp. De loods en de kat. Het Zeegevecht met den Kaper. Droevig ongeluk van het Oost-Indisch schip de Koning William. Volney Beckner. Wonderlijke duikkunst en uiteinde van Nicolaas Pesce. Een gevecht met den Tijger. Een bange Vaart. Noordsche windmakers en knoopen draaijers. De pest te Londen. Het blinde schip. Jan van Amstel* (Leiden: D. Noothoven van Goor, 1865)

The fame of the book, presumably, transcended the Netherlands. Demand created for the translation of the book into other European languages. As we see, the book was first translated into German in 1676, within a year of its first publication. The book was translated by a seventeenth-century famous travel writer and a VOC surgeon Wouter Schouten and was included in his edited book titled as *Ost-Indische Reyse : Worin ... Viel gedenckwürdiges ... bluthige See- und Feld-Schlachten, wieder die Portugisen und Makasser, Belägerungen, Bestürmungen und Eroberungen vieler fürnehmen Städte und Schlösser ... Nebenst noch Dem gefährlichen Schiffbruch des Jagt-schifs, ter Schelling genant, Von Frantz Janß. von der Heyde aufgezeichnet. Mit vielen kunstreichen Figuren geziert. Und Aus dem Niederländischen ins Hochteutsche übersetzt durch J.D.* It was published by Meurs and Sommeren from Amsterdam. This German translation had at least seven editions.

Later, in 1681 the book was translated into French. The French title of this book reads as *Relation du naufrage d'un vaisseau hollandois, nommé Ter Schelling, vers la côte de Bengala.* The French version had several reprints. The most recent edition appeared in 1999, published by Chandeigne press in Paris. The title is different from the earlier translation— *Le naufrage du ``Terschelling'' sur les côtes du Bengale: 1661.*

The book was translated into English in 1682 not from the Dutch version but from French. The title of the book also shows the fact: *A relation of an unfortunate voyage to the kingdom of Bengala...*, much similar to the first French translation. It was translated by Glanius, possibly an English national who had good command over French and Dutch. We do not know much about Glanius. Perhaps it was a pseudonym as Lach and Van Kley think.¹¹ He translated several Dutch travelogues into English and French. Amongst popular Dutch travelogues, he translated a book of Jan Janszoon Struys.¹² But interestingly enough, in English translations he did not mention the name of original authors. For instance, nowhere in his translation of *Vervarehyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter*

¹¹ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the making of Europe*., vol. III, 1, p. 496

¹² For French translation of Jan Janszoon Struys' book see Jan Janszoon Struys , *Les voyages de Jean Struys, en Moscovie, en Tartarie, en Perse, aux Indes, et en plusieurs autres païs étrangers : accompagnés de remarques particulières sur la qualité, la religion ... / a quoi l'on a ajouté la relation d'un naufrage par Monsieur Glanius, trans. by Glanius, vol. three* (Amsterdam, 1718-1719)

Schelling the readers find the name of real author.¹³ Therefore, the readers of English translation may easily confuse the book as an English travel writing that indeed did most of the readers of it as well as some scholars who used the book. The English translation is not also authentic and some parts are misleading too. The translator did not maintain chronological description and in several parts, he distorted original narratives. One such instance of distortion is quite evident when one reads the description of cannibalism practice of a neighbouring region of Assam. The translated version informs the readers that the Dutch had direct conversation with the man-eaters in where they asked them several questions such as: why the man-eaters did eat human flesh? And in reply the man-eaters told the Dutch men that it was their culture. But if the readers consult the Dutch version of the book they will not find this narrative. Van der Heiden nowhere in his book mentions such conversation with the man-eaters. The author rather provides a general description of characteristics of the man-eaters. The Dutch did not pose such questions as the translation informs us.¹⁴

Academic interest in the book

Now we will see how the historians have used this book? And did most of them use the Dutch version of it? The book is important for the historians of South Asia, particularly those who deal with the Mughals, pre-colonial Bengal and Assam. It has been so far used by few Asian historians. For instance, Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, Sudhindra Nath Bhattacharyya and Suryya Kumar Bhuyan

¹³ See Glanius, *A Relation of an unfortunate voyage to the kingdom of Bengala: Describing the deplorable condition, and dismal accidents, attending those therein concerned. How that after the loss of their ship, they were forced to abide by in a desert, and barren island; to eat leaves, Todas, Serpents, & etc. and reduced to that extremity, as to digg open graves, to feed human bodies. As also, the manner of their deliverance out of that place; and what befell them afterwards, in the service of the great Mogol. Together with choice observations, touching that monarch's government, laws, customs and armies; and especially his late war against the kings of Azo and Assam, with several other remarkable particularities* (London: Henry Bonwick, 1682) . The same happens to another Dutch travelogue. In English translation Glanius did not mention the author's name. See Glanius, *A new voyage to the East-Indies: containing an account of those rich countries, and more particularly of the kingdom of Bantam: giving an exact relation of the extent of the monarch's dominions, the religion, manners and customs of the inhabitants, their commerce, and the product of the country, and likewise a faithful narrative of the kingdom of Siam, of the isles of Japan and Madagascar and of several other parts, with such new discoveries as were never yet made by any other traveler* (London: H. Rodes, 1682)

¹⁴ See for a comparative reading of the two versions of this narrative see Glanius, *A Relation of an unfortunate voyage to the kingdom of Bengala*, p. 166; Van der Heiden, *Vernarelyke Schip-Breuk*, p. 124

used the book in their studies.¹⁵ But all of them used Glanius' translation. A few European historians working on South Asia such as Jos Gommans and Willem van Schendel also used the book in their studies.¹⁶ But still the book is not widely used and appreciated as it is worthy of.

Conclusion

Since 1675 until date the book has at least 24 editions. From the above publication history we can well infer that it had immense popularity among the European readers, particularly among the Dutch, between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. However, scarce information about Van der Heiden leads us to presume that he could not manage to get the attention of the literary critics of his age. Contemporary and later period scholars largely neglected him and his work, perhaps, because of their failure to perceive the historical significance of his work. The next chapter will offer an overview of the seventeenth-century Dutch travel literature and attempt to situate *Vervarelyke schipbreuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* in the larger index of Dutch travel literature.

¹⁵ See Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The Life of Mir Jumla: The General of Aurangzeb* (New Delhi: Rajesh Publication, 1907); Sudhindra Nath Bhattacharyya, *A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy: Being a study of the political relation of the Mughal Empire with Koch Bihar, Kamrup and Assam* (Calcutta: Chuckerverty, Chatterjee & Co. Ltd., 1929)

¹⁶ See Jos Gommans, *Mughal warfare: Indians Frontier and Highroads to Empire, 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 2002); Willem van Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); Meghna Guhathakurta & Willem van Schendel, *The Bangladesh Reader: History, Politics, Culture* (Duke University Press, 2013, forthcoming)

Chapter Two

The seventeenth-century Dutch travel literature on Asia and the location of *Vervarelyke schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling*

Introduction

The Dutch were very much in the forefront in the production of travel literature in Europe on the Asiatic region in the seventeenth century. The literature considerably enhanced Europe's knowledge of Asia in significant ways. The present chapter makes an overview of different genres of Dutch travel literature and also provides a brief outline on other kinds of such literature produced in Europe in the same period. The comparative exercise is intended to enhance the implication of seventeenth-century Dutch travel literature on Asia. In the last section of the chapter and arguably the most important one, I seek to situate the work of Frans Jansz van der Heiden's *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* in the larger canon of Dutch travel literature. As already mentioned in the earlier chapter, Van der Heiden was a VOC sailor who travelled to India in 1661, and who upon his return to the Netherlands got his observations published in a book.

The seventeenth-century Dutch travel literature on Asia

From the last decade of the sixteenth century to the late seventeenth century a significant amount of Dutch travel literature was written and published on Asia. Given the scale of literature produced one is tempted to ask the question: what motivated the writing and publication of this literature? It is pertinent to note that in 1578, the city of Amsterdam had only one publisher and by 1585, the city possessed two book stores and a printing press as well. There was a further advance over the next fifteen years, an exponential increase in book production. Amsterdam now surpassed every other city of the Dutch Republic in printing and publishing business. The city saw an influx of publishers,

book sellers, and printers.¹⁷ Among other things, books relating to cartographies and sea sciences were also published. Thus, towards the end of seventeenth century, Amsterdam had become a leading hub for printing and publishing books in Europe, if not in the world. However, one may reasonably wonder: what factors accelerated the book publishing industry in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century?

A palpable change was taking place in the Dutch Republic or United Provinces shortly before the rise of Amsterdam as a printing and publishing hub. One of the major developments that occurred during the course of the time was the massive migration of people from different parts of the Low Countries to the city of Amsterdam.¹⁸ Between 1572 and 1630 sixty-nine book publishers and printers migrated to Amsterdam and fifty six to Leiden from different parts of the Netherlands.¹⁹ Migrants flowed in from the southern Netherlands, particularly from Antwerp and Louvain. Mention particularly needs to be made of the Flemish artist, cartographer and engraver Joost de Hondt, Jodocus Hondius, Willem Blaeu and other book publishers like Plantin, Elzevier and Cornelis Claeszoon. All of them played an important role in the development of printing and publishing industry in the Dutch Republic.

The Eighty years of War (1568-1648) between Spain and the United Provinces that led to a massive migration from southern to the northern Netherlands also played a significant role in the development of the publishing industry in the Netherlands.²⁰ Arguably, the War underpinned almost all the branches of cultural and intellectual activities in the United Provinces. It also dismantled the usual trade structure of the United Provinces and compelled the Dutch merchants to establish direct contact with Asian countries. Eventually this led to an opportunity where the Dutch gained further

¹⁷ Johannes Gerardus Carolus Antonius Briels, “De Zuidnederlandse *Immigratie* in Amsterdam en Haarlem Omstreeks, 1572-1630: Meet een keuze van archivalische gegevens betreffende de kunstschilders” (PhD diss., The Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht, 1976), p. 71

¹⁸ Briels, “De Zuidnederlandse *Immigratie*”, p. 71-2

¹⁹ For detail treatment about the development of printing press and publishing house in the Netherlands see J.G.C .A Briels *Zuidnederlandse boekdrukkers en boekverkopers in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden omstreeks 1570-1630 : een bijdrage tot de kennis van de geschiedenis van het boek : met in bijlage bio- en bibliografische aantekeningen betr. Zuid- en Noordnederlandse boekdrukkers, uitgevers, boekverkopers, lettergieters etc., en andere documenten* (Nieuwkoop : De Graaf, 1974)

²⁰ For a detail treatment of the influence of the eighty years war see C.R Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 1-32

entrance and knowledge about the Asian world, of which I briefly spoke about in the introduction. The War also stimulated experiments in self-government and the founding of institutions for cultivating scholarship. One such telling example of this was the foundation of Leiden University. Leiden University later emerged as a centre of intellectual activity in the United Provinces which not only promoted local scholars but even intellectuals from the whole of Europe.

Restriction and censorship on publication in different European countries was yet another reason that catalysed the development of publication industry in the United Provinces in the seventeenth century. The United Provinces were more liberal, at least in the seventeenth century, than other European countries and did not impose rigid censorship on thoughts and publications. So many books which could not be published from France or Portugal could easily see the light of day in the Dutch Republic. This motivated liberal thinkers to come to the United Provinces and get their books published here.

All these developments which took place in the United Provinces from the second half of the sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century generated a wide readership in the Netherlands. Besides, the Dutch travel literature also had a considerable readership in neighboring European countries; for instance in Germany, where every year a book fair used to be organized in Frankfurt which allowed an opportunity for circulation of books to the wider readers in Europe. It was during this period that many among the Dutch set forth on their journeys to Asia. Most of them went as soldiers and petty VOC servants and consequently acquired knowledge on Asian society, polity, religion, geography and landscapes. Upon their return, many among them were keen to publish their accounts of their journey overseas, especially given the huge readership.

The Dutch travel literature published in the seventeenth century was not only very significant quantitatively but was also quite diverse thematically. However, historians thus far have not paid enough attention to categorize these travelogues. No doubt Lach and Van Kley in their *Asia in the Making of Europe* provide a fantastic and comprehensive overview of the European travel literature on Asia, their efforts are limited to providing basic information on these travelogues and not categorizing it. As Roelof van Gelder pertinently observes that while most of the studies on travel literature repeatedly pointed out the lack of general survey and the inadequacy of the bibliography of European travel literature they did not seem to feel any urgency to categorize it.²¹ On his part, Van Gelder did make an attempt to classify this literature. He divided it broadly into two genres, of which

²¹ Gelder, *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur*, p. 72

the first was named *apodemische* literature. *Apodemische* literature provided instruction about voyage: how people should travel, how one to behave on their voyage, how one can observe and keep diaries, etc. Besides, it also provides discussion on cosmography and geography, and a description of the city as well.²² The other genre is an actual travel report, a kind of travel literature in itself. It is more elaborate and provides a day to day description of the travel.²³

However, if we critically examine the seventeenth century Dutch travel literature based on topic, themes and characteristics, we can divide it primarily into two groups: a). primary accounts and b). secondary studies. These groups can again be divided into subtle categories. Primary accounts include: 1). Navigational account 2). Account of exploration 3). Travel journal/account and secondary accounts cover: 4). Commercial 5). Historical 6). Scholarly 7). Missionary In the following pages different genres of Dutch travel literature will be discussed with few examples of such literature.

Primary accounts:

Navigational account

The number of travelogues which exclusively dealt with navigational routes and information on sailing to Asia and other overseas lands is small. The question that interests us here is whether these authors were writing this genre of travelogue anticipated the readers of their books? To put it the other way around: what specific reasons tempted them to write and publish these particular kinds of travelogues? We have seen that because of the Eighty years of War and its subsequent impact, the United Provinces was desperate to establish direct trade relation with Asian countries. Previously, the Portuguese and the Spanish who were supreme in maritime explorations only knew navigation route to Asia. Therefore, to make direct trade relation with Asian countries, the merchants and entrepreneurs of the Dutch Republic of the period needed to acquire knowledge of routes besides geographical, climatic and other information pertaining to Asia. It seems plausible to believe that the authors of this genre were well aware of the general developments in the United Provinces and the need for such a literature. Consequently their books were suffused with practical information for sailors and voyagers who intended to make their journey overseas. The travelogues also interested

²² Gelder, *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur*, p. 72

²³ Gelder, *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur*, p. 72

cartographers and enthusiastic readers who out of their curiosity were interested to know about sea-faring. Given the amount of information they contained on sea routes and geography of certain area, such travelogues were also immensely useful in drawing maps of overseas countries and maritime routes. The importance of map making and geography need not be exaggerated. It was essential for any 'sea born trading empire', as map served as an important tool for voyaging new lands. Thus one can presume that this genre of literature was essentially written by authors who gathered substantial knowledge on navigation either by their work experience, or from other sources they managed to get access to.

A good example of this kind of travelogue is Jan Huygen van Linschoten's *Het verbeven en verdorven Azië: woord en beeld in het Itinerario en de Icones van Jan Huygen van Linschoten* commonly known as *Itinerario*, which provided relevant information on navigation. Born in 1563 in Enkhuizen, a city of northern Netherlands, Van Linschoten had a versatile career. He left the United Provinces at the age of sixteen and went to India to work for the Portuguese Company.²⁴ He spent almost nine years in the Portuguese service in India. During his service he stayed most of his time in Goa, the headquarters of the Portuguese trading empire in India, and returned to Enkhuizen in 1592. Upon his return, he published *Itinerario* in 1595/96.²⁵ It was based on his personal experience and also on the information of *rutters* and maps he acquired from unpublished Portuguese manuscripts. *Itinerario* was a profound work, a guide book in which, Van Linschoten provided important information on sailing directions for the sailors who sailed to Southeast Asia in the last decade of sixteenth century and in early seventeenth century.²⁶ In fact all most all the fleets sailing to Southeast Asia would carry a copy of *Itinerario*. It is also believed that *Itinerario* was extremely useful for Houtman's journey to Southeast Asia.²⁷ It ran into numerous editions and renditions and was translated into almost all European languages.

²⁴ E.M. Beekman, 'Dutch colonial literature: Romanticism in the tropics' *Indonesia*, 34(1998), p. 17

²⁵ For detail account of Van Linschoten's life and career see A. van der Moer (ed.), *Een zestiende-Eeuwse Hollander in het verre oosten en het hoge Noorden: Leven en werken, reizen en avonturen van Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, 1563-1611* ('s-Gravenhage Martinus Nijhoff, 1979)

²⁶ For detail see Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, *Het verbeven en verdorven Azië: woord en beeld in het Itinerario en de Icones van Jan Huygen van Linschoten* (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2000)

²⁷ Beekman, 'Dutch colonial literature', p. 17

Account of exploration

This genre of travel literature characteristically provided detail description of exploration and the experiences the author had in particular voyages. This kind of travel literature was popular among the people of the United Provinces, particularly to the enthusiastic Dutch men who aspired or dreamed to make voyages like these. Enthusiastic people at home were curious to know about the thrilling experience of voyages and about the unknown tropical countries and societies.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, in 1600, we find such an account in which an explorer, Van Neck shared experiences of his voyage to Southeast Asia. The account was first briefly published in 1599. But in 1600 we get a detailed account of Van Neck's expedition when Van Warwijks, one of the members of that expedition, returned to the Netherlands. The title of the book read as *Journael ofte dagh-register: inhoudende een waerachtigh verbael ende historische vertellinghe vande reyse*. The second edition of the book appeared in 1601, in a slightly different title: *Het tweede boeck: Journael ofte dagh-register inhoudende een waerachtig verbael*. This book ran into different translations such as English, French, German and Italian.²⁸ It provided various kinds of information such as geographical, hydrographical, and partly navigational. The book also supplied information on different Islands of the Indonesian Archipelago such as Java, Tuban, Moluccas, Amboina and Ternate. It informed about spice trade and political economy of Ternate and Tidore.²⁹

In 1606, a brief pamphlet was published about a valorous expedition of Steven van der Hagen on which he headed the VOC to overpower the Portuguese in Amboina and Moluccas and in some other parts of Asia. It is understandable that this kind of book which would provide the news of defeat of enemy ship or of an enemy country would attract much readership. Later this pamphlet was elaborated and included in a famous collection of Dutch travelogue titled *Begin ende Voortgngb*.³⁰

²⁸ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 440

²⁹ See for detail account of van Neck and van Warwicks' experiences of Southeast Asia, Gerrit de Vier, *Oost-Indische voyagien door dien Begin en Voortgngb, van de Vereenighde Nederlandtsche geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie : vervatende de voornaamste reysen, by de inwoonderen der selver Provintien derwaerts ghedaen : eerste Deel : Daer in begrepen zijn 16 Voyagien* (Amsterdam : voor Joost Hartgerts, 1648)

³⁰ Isaac Commelin (ed.), *Begin ende voortgngb van de Nederlantsche Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie: Vervatende de voornaemste reysen, by de inwoonderen der selver provincien gedaen: alles nevens de beschrij vinghen der rijcken, eylanden, havenen, rivieren, stroomen, rheaden, winden, diepten en ondiepten: mitsgaders religien, manieren, aerdt, politie ende regeeringhe der volckeren: oock meede haerder speceryen,*

Voyage account of Jacob La Marie and Willem Corneliszoon Schouten became one of the few best sellers in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. The account of their journey, *Journal ofte beschryvinghe van de wonderlicke reyse*³¹ was first published in 1617 under the name of Willem Corneliszoon Schouten who did not even bother to mention his friend's name—Jacob La Marie—who was, in fact, the chief explorer of the voyage they both undertook. However, a book was published posthumously by La Marie's father under La Marie's name in 1622. But, in the meantime Schouten's account received prodigious popularity. The book ran into twelve editions and was translated into several languages. La Marie and Schouten's accounts provided new knowledge on Asia. On their voyage, they visited Taumotu, Tonga and Solomon Islands. La Marie and Schouten's accounts altogether had thirty-eight editions in the seventeenth century.

Hendrik Hamel's *Journael van de ongeluckige voyagie van't jacht de Sperwer*³² published in 1668 supplied substantial knowledge on Korea to the European readers. Hamel was a VOC servant caught by typhoon in 1653 on his way to Nagasaki from Taiwan. His ship *Sparrow Hawk* was perished in the South Korean coast. Only about half of the crew survived the disaster. However, those who managed to survive the shipwreck were later arrested by Korean officials and sent to the office of the Governor, where they were forced to live in imprisonment for ten months. But their imprisonment was a comfortable one and later they were released with honour. Hamel provided information on climate, geography, government, military organization, law, judicial practices, religion, language and social customs of Korea.³³ *Journael van de ongeluckige voyagie van't jacht de Sperwer* gained so much popularity that it had three editions in 1668, the same year, in which it was published. The book was also translated into several European languages.

Until the mid-seventeenth century most of the Dutch travelogues supplied information about the coastal and port cities of Java. However, the interior remained unknown. After the mid-

drooghen, geldt ende andere koopmanschappen met veele discoursen verrijckt: nevens eenighe koopere platen verciert: nut ende dienstigh alle curieuse, ende de andere zee-varende liefhebbers (Amsterdam: Johannes Janssonius, 1646)

³¹ Willem Corneliszoon Schouten, *Journal ofte beschryvinghe van de wonderlicke reyse ghedaen door Willem Corneliszoon Schouten van Hoorn, in de jaren 1615, 1616 en 1617* (Amsterdam, 1618)

³² Hendrik Hamel, *Journael van de ongeluckige voyagie van 't jacht de Sperwer van Batavia gedestineert na Tayowan in 't jaar 1653, en van daar op japan, hoe 't selve jacht door stroom op 't Quel-paarts eylant is ghestrant, hoe de maats van daar naar 't Coninckrijk Coeree sijn vervoert* (Amsterdam: Johannes Stichter, 1668)

³³ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 487-8

seventeenth century the Dutch began to explore inner parts of Southeast Asia, particularly Java. Rijcklof Volckertszoon van Goen in his *Javaense reijse*³⁴ delivered detailed information on Mataram. Van Goen served in different capacities for the VOC. He was once the chief merchant, ambassador and later promoted as a member of the council of the Indies. He was also sometime the governor of the Dutch trade in Ceylon and finally became the Governor of the Dutch Indies.³⁵ As an ambassador, between 1648 and 1654, he made five more journeys to Mataram royal court.³⁶ *Javanese reisje* offered description on the landscapes, king, royal court and etiquette of Mataram.

Travel journal/account

A genre of travelogue published in the seventeenth century gives a general account of travel experience in Asiatic region. The basic features of these accounts are: some of these accounts are practical, educational and sensational. And some combine all these qualities. One could get the practical travel experience and learn interesting and important information from these accounts. Some stories were sensational and full with adventure. This genre of literature was hugely popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The period between sixteenth and the seventeenth century marked the age of discovery in Europe. During this period Europeans were engaged in exploration of overseas world. Although the entry of the Dutch entrepreneurs and voyagers to the field of sea voyages was late, when they set out their adventurous and stimulating journeys to the volatile sea, the curious Dutch men at home were enthusiastic to know the story about the adventure of their heroic men. During their voyages the heroic voyagers often encountered rough seas, got shipwrecked and subsequently faced terrible experiences. The more adventure, experience and information a story could provide the more popularity the story would get. Besides adventure story the readers wanted to know information of the unknown land and societies.³⁷

One such fitting example of this genre of literature is Willem Ysbrantsz Bontekoe's *Journael*. His *Journael* was one of the most popular travelogues and was published in 1646 in the United Provinces. The book became immensely popular and had at least thirty editions in the seventeenth

³⁴ Rijcklof Volckertszoon van Goen, *Javaense reijse gedaen van Batavia over Samarangh na de koninckijcke hoofdplaats Mataram* (Dordrecht, 1666)

³⁵ Willem M Ottow, *Rijckloff Volckertsz van Goens : de carrière van een diplomaat 1619-1655* (Utrecht : Stichting Pressa Trajectina, 1954)

³⁶ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 485

³⁷ Gelder, *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur*, pp. 106-7

century and was also included in numerous collections published over the centuries.³⁸ It was also translated into all most all European languages. The episodes Bontekoe described in his adventure book became one of the 'household vocabularies of the seventeenth century Dutchmen'.³⁹ Bontekoe was a brave Dutch sailor (captain) who made countless voyages to East Indies but all most all of his voyages were related to disaster; in every journey he encountered tough situations. He faced so many cataclysmic disasters during his journey and much bad luck and affliction that 'his name became a part of the Dutch language in the expression of 'een reis van Bontekoes (a journey of Bontekoe)⁴⁰ : a trip which is very troublesome and accident prone. Aside from his sensational story of bad luck and numerous disasters he encountered throughout his voyages, Bontekoe provided information on the Dutch raids on Macao, several Chinese coastal regions and information on newly built city of Java, in Southeast Asia.⁴¹

Another example of this genre of travel literature can be Jan Janszoon Struys's trilogy *Reysen*⁴². Jan Struys, a tireless adventurer, started his voyage to the sea in 1574, at the age of seventeen and continued his journeys for twenty-six years with occasional gaps. During the course of his voyages he encountered several hurricanes, got shipwreck, and endured hunger and imprisonment. Scholars consider it as semi fictional travel account.⁴³ Several literary critics questioned the veracity,

³⁸ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 474

³⁹ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I p. 474

⁴⁰ Beekman, 'Dutch colonial literature', p. 19 also Willem Ysbrantsz. Bontekoe, *Memorable Description of the East Indian Voyage 1618-25*, ed. P. Geyl, trans. Mrs. C. B. Bodde-Hodgkinson (London: Routledge, 1929), p. 1

⁴¹ For a detail overview of his journey see Bontekoe, *Memorable Description of the East Indian Voyage 1618-25*,

⁴² Jan Janszoon Struys, *Drie aanmerkelijke en seer rampspoedige Reysen, door Italien, Griekenland, Lijfland, Moscovien, Tartarijen, Meden, Persien, Oost-Indien, Japan, en verscheyden andere Gewesten. Waar in vertoont werden, behalven een nauwkeurige, en tot omstandige beschrijvinge der gemelde Landen, en 't geen tot haar nature behoort, seer wonderlijke, en waarachtige toevallen den Auteur overgekomen door Schipbreuken, Plonderingen, Slavernije onder de Turken, en Persianen, sware Hongers-noot, Pijniging, en andere ongemakken. Aangevangen anno 1647, en voor de derde of laatste Reys t' Huys gekomen 1673, begrijpende zo in alles den tijd van 26 jaren. Nevens twee Brieven, particulierlijk verhandelende het overgaan van Astracan, en 't geene aldaar omtrent is voorgevallen; En daar in ook een verhaal der elenden, en swaare ongemakken, uytgestaan by D. Butler, door hem selfs geschreven uyt Ispahan. Met verscheydene curieuse koopere Plaaten, door den Auteur selfs na het leven geteekent, verciert* (t' Amsterdam: acob van Meurs, 1676)

⁴³ For instance Lach and Van Kley classified it as a semi-fictional travel account. See Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 497

integrity and trustworthiness of the account.⁴⁴ However, Kees Boterbloem in his study of Jan Struys's work demonstrates the importance of the book for academic use. He argues the book is a key source to reconstruct the early modern history of Russia.⁴⁵ He categorizes *Reysen* as a hybrid genre which combines ingredients of autobiography, travel journal, chorography, quasi-Biblical parable, Dutch epic, picaresque and sensationalist pamphleteering, early journalism and odyssey.⁴⁶ But he, too, believes there was a 'ghost writer', most possibly Dapper, behind the writing of the book. *Reysen* was translated into several languages such as German, English and French. It had several editions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Secondary studies:

Commercial report

During the seventeenth century and onwards because of Company's trading purpose, the VOC servants produced the bulk of commercial reports on Asia. These commercial reports dispensed substantial information on trade and commerce of Asia. Apart from supplied information on commerce, these reports provided information on society, culture and polity of Asia. However, the commercial reports were not published immediately, and in some cases many Company reports were never published at all.

One such evident example is of Francisco Pelsaert's official report entitled *Remonstrantie*. Pelsaert was a senior VOC factor at Agra, in northern India. His account provided valuable knowledge on Mughal India. In fact, Pelsaert's account was a trade report produced in 1626 and was sent to the then VOC director for Dutch trade in India. His account primarily stressed on trade and economy of the concerned area. However, in addition to usual trade reporting, he casted light on various aspect of Mughal India; he especially dispensed vivid knowledge on towns, people and their

⁴⁴ Critics like Philippe Avril, Pieter Rabus and Francis Halma launched a severe criticism on *Reysen*. For detail see Pieter Avril, *Reize door verscheidene Staten van Europa en Asia*, trans. H.van Quellenburgh (Utrecht: Anthony Schouten, 1694), p.33,45; Pieter Rabus, 'Berigt wegens Jan Janz Struis,' *De Boekzaal van Europa* (May-June, 1694), 562-5; Kees Boterbloem, *The Fiction and Reality of Jan Struys: A Seventeenth-century Dutch Globetrotter* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 158-61

⁴⁵ See Boterbloem, *The Fiction and Reality of Jan Struys*

⁴⁶ Boterbloem, *The Fiction and Reality of Jan Struys*, p. 150

religions, culture, customs, climate, landscapes and agriculture,⁴⁷ But Pelsaert's account was never published in Dutch. However, in 1663, part of his account was included in Thevenot's collection of travelogue.⁴⁸

Pieter van den Broecke's account is one of the important VOC reports which provided conspicuous knowledge on Asia to European readers. It was published in 1634, with a title: *Korte historiael en journaelsche aenteyckeninghe*⁴⁹. It ran into several reprints and editions during the seventeenth century itself. The book was included in different collections of travelogues such as in the *Begin ende voortgangh*. Van den Broecke served in different capacities for the VOC. He was the VOC director for Dutch trade in India, Persia and Arabia from 1620 to 1630. During his service in India he stayed in Surat. Before going to India, Van den Broecke made several voyages to Africa. In 1617, he undertook an overland journey from Damao to the Mausulipatnam. Thus, Van den Broecke's account possesses significant information on several regions of the world, particularly on India. *Korte historiael en journaelsche aenteyckeninghe* mostly centred on trade affairs and supplied information about the establishment of the Dutch Factory in India, its different cities and trading commodities. He also provided description on Moluccas and Ceylon. Alongside description on trade, his report provides a meticulous depiction of people, customs, beliefs and ritual of Asian countries

Historical studies

In the seventeenth century we get a genre of Dutch travelogue which is much similar to the historical studies. These books were written basically based on experiences of others' journeys and using others' personal diaries and documents or even interviews. Such writers would collect documents like travel notes, commercial reports, maps, etc. on specific regions they planned to write about and would later combine these sources to compose their books. But few writers had also experience of visiting some areas. However, most of these writers never visited the areas they wrote about. Such books earned much popularity as they provided a lot of valuable information.

⁴⁷ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 451

⁴⁸ See Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, 451

⁴⁹ Pieter van den Broecke, *Korte historiael ende journaelsche aenteyckeninghe, van al'tegheen merck-waerdig voorgevallen, in de langhduerighe reysen, soo nae Cabo, Angola, &c. Als insonderheydt van Oost-Indien... aldereerst (van wegen de Gheoctroyeerdr Oost-Indische Compagnie) besocht, en opghedaen* (Haarlem: Hans Passchiers van Wesbusch, 1634)

One telling example of this kind of travel literature is Olfert Dapper's study on China titled *Gedenkwaardig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye*.⁵⁰ It was published in 1670. An Amsterdam based physician Dapper never visited China. It is regarded as the most comprehensive study of China in the seventeenth century. This book was written based on the reports of the members of Balthasar Bort's expeditions. Dapper also used other sources in his book which was more like an encyclopaedic work that contained various kinds of information on China such as geography, climate, culture, tradition and religion. Olfert Dapper also authored a book on Mughal India. The book titled *Asia*⁵¹ was published in 1672. Similar to his earlier work, the book on Mughal India was also very encyclopaedic providing information on geography, social life, customs and religions, particularly Hinduism and Islam. Olfert Dapper also never travelled India. His main sources for the book were previously published books such as Rogerius' and others'. It is believed that Dapper substantially plagiarized from the manuscript of Philippus Baldaeus which, he perhaps managed to read from a publishing house in Amsterdam.⁵² Dapper wrote several other books of such kind on different regions.

Another example of historical work is Bernhard Varen's *Res Repulicae* published in 1649. He was an Amsterdam based physician and geographer. Varen's work dealt with Siamese and Chinese religion and missionary activities there. The book gleaned information from a number of earlier travelogues such as Hagenaner, Joost Schouten and from other's work.

In 1665 Johann Nieuhof published a very important work of such kind titled *Het gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie*.⁵³ His work provided detailed and comprehensive knowledge

⁵⁰ Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaardig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye, op de kuste en in het Keizerrijk van Taising of Sina: bebelzende bet 2^e gezantschap aen den Onder-Koning Singlamong... Vervolgt met een verbael van het voorgevallen des jares 1663 en 1664 op de kuste van Sina... en bet 3^e gezantschap Konchy, Tartarsche Keizer van Sina en Oost Tartarye... beneffens een beschryving van geheel Sina* (Amsterdam: J. Van Meurs, 1670)

⁵¹ Olfert Dapper, *Asia, of naukeurige beschryving van het rijk des Grooten Mogols, en een groot gedeelte van Indiën... beneffens een volkome beschryving van geheel Persie, Georgie, Mengrelie en andere gebuur-gewesten... verciert doorgaens met verscheide afbeeldingen in kooper gesneden* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1672)

⁵² Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 490-1

⁵³ Johann Nieuhof, *Het gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie aan den grooten tartarischen cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China* (Amsterdam, 1665)

of China. Nieuhof was a secretary of Dutch embassy in China. His book on China was written combining his personal observations and other travel literatures. For example, his work used substantial information from the works of Trigault, Semeoand Martini. Besides giving extended knowledge on China he added some 150 illustration in his book. It had six Dutch, three German, two English, one Latin and French editions in the seventeenth century.

In the last decade of the seventeenth century, in 1692, an important account on Northeast Asia was published from Amsterdam. Nicolaas Witsen in his *Noord en Oost Tartarye*⁵⁴ supplied specialized knowledge on Asia. Witsen also did not travel to any of the Asian countries.

Scholarly work

Because of Renaissance and scientific revolution between the fourteenth and seventeenth century Europe saw great enthusiasm in arts and literature and science. Asia also made a good contribution to Europe's Renaissance and scientific revolution. Asia worked as one of the practical grounds for Europe's scientific revolution. During the seventeenth century a number of Dutch Doctors and scientists went to Asia for the service of the VOC. These doctors and scientists did their practical experiments in Asia. They used to collect samples of trees and diseases and used them in their scientific experiments. These scholars wrote scholarly books on botany, Asian diseases, medics and other issues. Although this genre of scholarly works did not have many readers, it made substantial contribution to European scholarship, particularly to the Dutch scholarship.

One such example of scholarly work is Jacob de Bontius' *De medicina Indorum*. It is credited as the first book by any Dutch writer written in Dutch language on tropical medicine. The book was published from Leiden in 1642. Jacob de Bontinus a Leiden graduated physician went to Batavia to the service of the Dutch East India Company in 1627. When he died in Batavia in 1631, Bontius was

⁵⁴ Nicolaas Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartarye, ofte bondig ontwerp van eenige dier landen en volken, welke voormaels bekend zijn geweest. Beneffens verscheide de tot noch toe onbekende, en meest nooit voorbeer beschreve Tartersche en Nabuurige Gewesten, Landstreeken, Steden, Rivieren, en Plaetzen, in de Noorder en Oosterlyks[...] Gedeelten van Asia en Europa Zoo buiten en binnen de Rivieren Tanais en Oby, als omtrent de Kaspische, Indische- en Zwarte Zee gelegen; gelijk de Landschappen Ninche, Dauria, Jesso, Moegalia, Kalm[u]kia, Tangut, Vsbek, en Noorder Persie, Turkestan, Georgia, Mengrelia, Cirkassia, Crim, Astakkia, Altin, Tingoesia, Siberia, Samojedia, en andere aen hunne Tzaersche Majesteiten Kroon geboorende Heerschappyen. Verdeeld in twee Stukken, Met der zelver Land-kaerten: mitsgaders, onderscheidene Afbeeldingen van Steden, Drachten, enz. Zedert naeuwkeurig onderzoek van veele Jaren, en eigen ondervindinge ontworpen, beschreven, geteekent, en in't licht gegeven* (Amsterdam, 1692)

still working on the book and left the work unfinished. It is inferred that *De medicina Indorum* came to the Netherlands through an unidentified person who delivered the manuscript to one of the friends of Bontius—Willem Piso—who was an Amsterdam based physician. Presumably, he made all the arrangements for the publication of the book.⁵⁵ Bontius in his book used his medical experiences in Batavia; he made references to about nineteen common diseases of Asia. Apart from human diseases he provided descriptions on Asian animals and plants. He appended quite a number of plates in the book showing the images of animals and plants. Thus the book is regarded as one of the scholarly contributions produced in the seventeenth century.

In 1678, Hendrik Adriaan van Rheede tot Drakestein contributed a scholarly work on the Malabar Coast. As a special investigator for the VOC directors, Van Rheede tot Drakestein was sent to India in 1671. He was interested in botany and was impressed to observe tropical trees and plants which he, on his own cost made an enterprise to sketch. Thus, in his book, Hendrik Adriaan produced considerable knowledge on Indian trees and plants.

Missionary work

During the seventeenth century as VOC servants and missionary preachers, many Dutch Christian missionaries made their journeys overseas, especially to Asia. These missionaries mostly because of missionary activities and also for personal interest in religion wanted to know Asian religion. As a consequence, in the seventeenth century we get a number of traveller accounts written by missionary activists principally dealing with religion.

One such good example of this genre of travel literature is Reverend Abraham Rogerius' *De open-deure tot het verborgen heydendom*.⁵⁶ Rogerius was one of the famous Dutch theologians and missionaries who did a comprehensive and in-depth study of Hinduism, Heathenism and public life of South India, particularly Tamil country. Abraham Rogerius, trained in theology in Amsterdam within the tradition of Dutch reformed classics, went to Dutch trading settlement at Pulicat in the Coromandel Coast in 1632. There he worked for the service of VOC for about ten years, from 1632 to 1642. After which Rogerius went to Batavia and served for five years there. Abraham Rogerius

⁵⁵ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 457

⁵⁶ Abrahamvs Rogerius, *De open-deure tot het verborgen heydendom: Waerachtigh vertoogh van het Leven ende Zeden; misgaders de Religie ende Gods-Dienst der Bramines op de Cust Chormandel en de Landen daar ontrent* (Leiden: Francoys Hackes, 1651)

finally returned to the United Provinces in 1647. Two years later he died in Gouda, a city of the Netherlands. After his death his wife with the help of one of the friends of him, Jacobus Sceperus, made an arrangement for publication of the book.⁵⁷ The book was published posthumously in 1651 and is arguably one of the best in-depth and objective representations of Asian religion, particularly of South Indian, written by a Dutch. It is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with the customs and life of South Indian Brahmin. The second part deals with religion, beliefs and rites of the Hindus, particularly of Hindu Brahmins. The book was based on his consultation of Vedic and Purnaic *Mahabharata* and *Ramayna*, and his conversation with his Brahmin friends, notably Pdmanaba, Dmaesra and others. *De open-deure tot het verborgen heydendom* provided a clear overview of caste, social customs, religious practices and philosophical foundation and substance of Hinduism.⁵⁸ It was translated into several European languages such as French and German. The book had immense influence on the later authors who dealt with Asian religion; for instance, Baldaeus reproduced large parts of this work in his own work on Asia. Reputed scholars such as Goethe, Herder Bernard and the famous nineteenth-century Indologist Max Muller greatly appreciated Rogerius' in-depth work.⁵⁹

Within this genre of travel literature, Philippus Baldaeus' *Naaumkeurige beschryvinge*⁶⁰ is regarded as one of the compelling works on Asian religion, particularly on India and Ceylon, published in the seventeenth century. Philippus Baldaeus went to Ceylon as a missionary in 1656 and spent about nine years there. He was one of the members of Rijckloff van Goen's campaign to Ceylon in 1658. His book dispensed information on religions of Ceylon and India. The book also supplied information on cities, countryside, trades and landscape of Ceylon and India. While Baldaeus relied on Abraham Roegerius' work while writing about religions, especially Hinduism in his writings he certainly provided fresh insights on religions of Ceylon and India for which he was duly acknowledged.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III. book. II, p. 1029-30.

⁵⁸ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III. book. II, p. 1056

⁵⁹ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III. book. II, p. 1057

⁶⁰ Philippus Baldaeus, *Naaumkeurige beschryvinge van Malabar en Choromandel, der zehver aangrenzende ryken, en het machtige eyland Ceylon : nevens een omstandige en grondigh doorzochte ontdekking en wederlegginge van de afgoderye der Oost-Indische heydenen...* (Amsterdam: By Daniel Bakkamude, 1672)

⁶¹ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 494, see for detail about Baldaeus's account on Hinduism see Baladaeus, *Naaumkeurige beschryvinge*, especially his chapter "Nauwkeurige en waaractige ontdekking en wederlegginge van de afgoderye der Oost-Indische Heyden, Malabaren, Benjanen, gentiven, Bramines, en meest alle andere Oost-Indianen,, uyt hun eygen geval ofte wet-boek, uyt Indien overgebracht, nevens andere authentijke en

Sebastiaen Danckaerts authored an important book in 1621 on religion and custom of Amboina. Danckaerts went to Amboina in 1617 to work as a minister and missionary preacher. Apart from commenting on Ambonese religion and customs, he provided information on trade, arts and crafts, and on general nature of the people of Amboina. Danckaerts also informed about the Portuguese effort to evangelize Ambonese. He gave description of missionary prospects of the Dutch in Amboina.⁶²

George Candidius' account on Formosa, *Discours ende Cort verbaal, van't Eylant Formosa*, was one of the well-known and informative works published in the seventeenth century. Candidius served as a missionary preacher in Formosa between 1627 and 1630 and from 1633 to 1637 again. He was the first Dutch missionary in Formosa. It is asserted that his *Discourse ende cort verhael van het eylant* was not published before it was included in the *Begin en de voortgangh* in 1645. His book is regarded as the first most comprehensive account written on Formosa by any Dutch in the seventeenth century.⁶³

Reyer Gysbertszoon's book published in 1637 informed readers about the prosecution of Christian missionaries in Japan, precisely, from 1622 to 1629. Gysbertszoon appreciated Japanese Christian for their affection and commitments towards Christianity. But he was widely accused for his anti-Catholic fervor. However, Gysbertszoon's book also reflected upon the early Tokugawa society and polity and was included in Hagenaeers's *Begin ende voortgangh* in 1645.⁶⁴

Thus, we have seen that the Dutch travel literature published in the seventeenth century was varied in form and structure provided various types of knowledge on Asia that covered information on trade, economy, polity, society, religion, culture, customs, rituals, geography and landscapes and so on. On the one hand it satisfied the public urge of reading and knowing the other world, and on the other, later, it appears as an important source for reconstructing pre-colonial history of Asia

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originale Hand-schriften, t' zamen-spraak en bywoonige met hun voornaamste priesters en wet-geleerden op-gespeurt, getrouwelijk aan den dag gebracht, en grondig wederleght"

⁶² Sebastiaan Danckaerts, *Historisch Ende Grondich Verbael, Vanden Standt des Christendoms int quartier van Amboina, mitsgaders vande hoope ende apparentie eenigher Reformatie ende beternisse van dien, / ghestelt door Sebastianus Danckaerts, Predicant ... aldaer ..* (In 's Graven-haghe, : by Aert Meuris, ..., 1621)

⁶³ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 454

⁶⁴ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. II, book. I, p. 455

In this section of the chapter, I will provide a comparative discussion of the travelogues of other European countries during the period. During the seventeenth century and before many travel letters and accounts were written in other parts of Europe. Spain and Portugal, the two Iberian countries, were forerunners in the European sea voyages. The Portuguese and Spanish kings and other private entrepreneurs had patronized maritime explorations. It was during the process of these explorations that Vasco da Gama, a famous Portuguese explorer discovered the route of sailing to India in 1497. The Portuguese and Spanish in the course of few years started to spread their trading and missionary activities in India, Southeast and East Asia. These explorations, in the passage of time led to the production of number of Iberian travelogues on Asia. Like the Dutch missionaries, Iberian Jesuits supplied significant knowledge of Asia to the European readers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Jesuit missionary preachers from Philippines, Japan, China, and India wrote their letters, letterbooks and pamphlets demonstrating their success in missionary activities. Between 1607 and 1667, a large number of Iberian Jesuit letterbooks and pamphlets were published.⁶⁵ The Iberian literature was regarded as the first travel literature which provided important knowledge of Asian countries to Europe. It supplied information on Philippines, China and Japan.⁶⁶ The Portuguese had specialized knowledge on sea routes. However, to maintain secrecy, so that other European countries could not have access to this, the Portuguese did not publish these *rutters* from the very beginning. But when these *rutters* – guide to sea—somehow began to leak out and passed to other European countries, the Portuguese began to publish them in the early seventeenth century.⁶⁷ A famous Dutch navigational account *Itinerario* also substantially borrowed from Portuguese *rutters*.

Alike Dutch travel account, seventeenth-century French literature made a good contribution to Europe's knowledge of Asia. For instance account of François Bernier provided substantial knowledge of Mughal state and polity.⁶⁸ His work gained immense popularity and was subsequently translated into all most all European languages. Bernier's work made a considerable imprint on the later scholarships on India. It is perceived that Karl Marx, the reputed German philosopher and social scientist, in analysing Asian state and society, was substantially influenced by Bernier's account

⁶⁵ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, Book-I, p. 307

⁶⁶ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 307

⁶⁷ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 313

⁶⁸ For his detail treatment of Mughal State, Polity and Indian Society see Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, AD 1656-1668*, second edition revised by Vincent A. Smith (New Delhi: Low Price publications, 1994))

on India. In theorizing *Asiatic mode of production*, *Village Community* and *Oriental Despotism*, the influence of Bernier on Marx is clearly observed.⁶⁹ Bernier also made a critical observation on Siamese life and customs in his book. Besides informative, educational and practical accounts semi-fictional and sensational accounts like the Dutch were also published in French.

Italian travel literature produced on Asia provided little knowledge on the Asiatic region compared to Dutch and other European literature. However, like many other European missionaries Italy also produced a number of Jesuit letterbooks in the seventeenth century. But most of these travelogues were translations of Portuguese, Spanish and French letterbooks.⁷⁰

Lach and Van Kley observe that the German travel literature on Asia in the first decade of the seventeenth century was not significant. Most of the works published in German were either German translations of Latin Jesuits letters or of Dutch travel literature.⁷¹ However, Van Gelder in his *Het Oostindische avontuur* demonstrates that the German travellers those who worked for the service of the VOC produced a good number of travelogues on Asia which supplied considerable information to the European readers.⁷²

Akin to Dutch travel literature English travelogue supplied useful information on Asia. Efforts like Richard Eden, Richard Willes and Richard Hakluyt fostered the publication of travel literature in the last decade of the sixteenth century and during the seventeenth century. They undertook an initiative to publish English travelogues and English translation of foreign travelogues. Hakluyt's work is regarded as one of the significant collections which contributed a lot to the production of knowledge on Asia by Europe. British adventurers like Ralph Fitch visited India and Southeast Asia and upon his return to Europe composed his knowledge on trade and political situation of India and Southeast Asia. Published in 1630, Henry Lord's account on Indian religions, particularly on Hinduism and *Parsis* or Zoroastrianism added substantial knowledge on Asia. The contribution of English literature was particularly important during the last two decades of the seventeenth century.⁷³

However, compared with other European countries on Asia in the seventeenth century the Dutch travel literature was not only greater in number but also more varied in its themes. One can

⁶⁹ For details see Irfan Habib, *Essays in Indian History: Towards Marxist Perception* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2005), pp. 22-9

⁷⁰ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 367-8

⁷¹ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 545

⁷² Gelder, *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur*, see especially p. 76

⁷³ Lach and Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, book. I, p. 569-576

thus assuredly say that the contribution of the seventeenth century Dutch travel literature to Europe's knowledge of Asia is more conspicuous than the rest of European travel literature published in the seventeenth century.

Where can we situate *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling*?

The question, which I will try to explain in this section, is: where can we situate Frans Jansz van der Heiden's *Vervarelyke schip-breuk Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* within the large corpus of Dutch travel literature published in the seventeenth century? We have already seen in the first chapter that Van der Heiden, a Dutch sail maker, visited some parts of Bengal and later joined the Mughal army as a conscripted soldier. By spending more than fifteen months he acquired experiences on the Mughal warfare, Bengal and its neighbouring states. Upon his return home he published his book. The question first comes is: did he really visit the region he describes? Was it real experience or fiction? It should be mentioned that no sources or historical works directly refer to Van der Heiden's name. But the VOC source reports about the particular shipwreck in a sandy shore of the Bay of Bengal in the year that the author mentioned in his book.⁷⁴ The source also mentions about the ill fate of the shipwrecked Dutch men and their services for the Mughal army for fifteen months as 'lent' soldiers. Other historical literatures also corroborate the information he provides in his book which I will investigate in detail in the next chapter.

In this chapter I have given example and characteristics of different genre of travel literature mainly written and published in the seventeenth century. It clearly seems that the book was not a navigational, scholarly, commercial or historical work. Then, what kind of travel writing *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* is? Can the book be compared with work like Bontekoe's *Journael* or Jan Struys's *Reysen*? We have seen that Bontekoe's account also describes the shipwreck and exceedingly terrible and recurring misery in his voyage. The period when Van der Heiden was writing his book, Bontekoe's account had already become one of the most popular readings in the Netherlands that 'satisfied the romantic imagination of the more sedentary citizens at home who could travel in this fashion without leaving their armchairs'.⁷⁵ All most every house in the seventeenth-century Netherlands possessed a copy of it on its shelf. One can infer that it had great imprint on the later travelogue writers. During the seventeenth century shipwreck and subsequent

⁷⁴ See introduction by C.E. Warnsinck-Delprat in Van der Heiden, *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk*, p. 15, 19

⁷⁵ Beekman, 'Dutch Colonial Literature: Romanticism in the Tropics' p. 20

misery became one of the recurring themes of the travel account. As Jan Struys also provides the account of plights and difficulties he faced in his journeys Muscovy. Kees Boterbloem seeks some similarities between *Reysen* and *Vervarelyke schip-breuk*.⁷⁶ But how far the book resembles the accounts like Bontekoe's *Journael* or Jan Struys's *Reysen*. The first concern of account like Bontekoe was to describe his plights and provide a sensational account of his adventure. It was more like an autobiographical description, although provides some information. While *Reysen* also an autobiographical travel account gives description of sufferings he endured, is interested in providing information too. But it was a semi-fictional account and is believed that a 'ghost writer' was behind the book helping the author of this book to write his account.

Like Bontekoe and Jan Struys, Van der Heiden provides his readers an account of recurrent disasters, bad luck, hunger, and several other plights involved in his journey. His writing style and presentation is simple— quite similar to Bontekoe's. Although the book has some similarities with *Journael* and *Reysen*, it has dissimilarities too. *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* was not written as autobiographical account and the book use 'We' instead of 'I' while giving description of his experiences. It provides almost a chronological description of his travel and his interest in providing information is quite noticeable all through the book. From his description of his experiences it seems plausible that he maintained notes during his journey. It is accepted that there was no ghost writer behind the book. In fact *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* is a travel account from which from which readers get interesting information about Asia. It supplied practical knowledge and information on the region. And one may also find sensational description of his adventure in this book which was a common feature of most of the seventeenth-century travel account.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion we saw that a large number and varieties of travelogues written and published in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. In this chapter we have identified the basic features of the of *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* and situated the book within the larger index of the Dutch travelogue. The next chapter will investigate how practical, useful and new information the book produced on India.

⁷⁶ See Boterbloem, *The Fiction and Reality of Jan Struys*, p.153

Chapter Three

Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling and the Production of Knowledge on India

Introduction

This chapter is arguably the most important part of the thesis. As I have indicated before the chapter intends to investigate: what knowledge Van der Heiden's *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* produced on India? It also raises some pertinent questions that are: how reliable is the information of the book and how do other literatures corroborate the information of the book? And how useful and important is this knowledge for the historical writings? Through an in-depth study of the book, I seek to explain the above questions.

Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling and the production of Knowledge on India

Van der Heiden begins his book with an attractive story. When Van der Heiden departed from Batavia along with other shipmates to Hugli, on the-ship *Ter Schelling*, all were good spirits and a cheerful mood. But on the 20th day of their journey, a strange incident happened. Their *bootman* or boatman on that specific day went to a remote part of the ship to get some ropes. He watched a terrible scene: a ghost was swimming beneath the water carrying few dead and distressed bodies. After the incident the young boatman named Hillebrant who was very energetic and jovial and used to make fun with his shipmates stopped doing silly fun. He also asked others to pray to God and not to make mirth. When the shipmates asked that what happened to him and what made him so depressed, he described the incident. Most of them did not believe him terming it as his hallucination. Nevertheless, the majority of them agreed that it was not a good sign.⁷⁷ In the following pages, the readers reveal that the incident was really not a good sign. The incident may occur or may not occur. But it is not impossible to see such scene in hallucination particularly in a stressed situation in the sea where the sail maker, very often, had to encounter disasters and bad luck.

⁷⁷ Van der Hedien, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 27

However, to start the narrative of a disaster prone journey with such a story is indeed a good technique. This, perhaps, drags the readers into the story. It, too, arouses suspense of the readers and makes the story lively.

In the subsequent pages the author provides a tedious and repetitive description of their misery, which may certainly produce repugnance for the readers of this age. When the ship, *Ter Schelling*, fall into hurricane and was about to perish despite the best effort of the sailors to save it, Van der Heiden and some of his shipmates made a life raft and managed to reach the coastal land of the Bay of Bengal. The author then tells the story of their adventure in that small barren island in where they were lack of food and drinking water. He writes that for the first day, they ate very little amount of food, which they had brought with them. The food was not enough for thirty two men.⁷⁸

After couple of hours they again felt hungry but found nothing to eat. Their hunger grew to an intolerable level. In their two weeks of stay on that island they survived by eating grass, leaves, serpents, rotten buffalo, iguana⁷⁹ and other wild animals.⁸⁰ These foods were in fact not edible at the one hand and on the other hand were not sufficient. The description of these sufferings and miseries seems realistic and plausible but one can point out exaggerations involved in his narratives.

The theme of Cannibalism

His narrative becomes very exciting when the readers encounter the cannibalism theme. In fact, cannibalism theme constitutes a large portion of his book. The author recounts that their hunger was so terrible that they had no way but to think about eating human flesh. He informs that one day they could not find their *domine* or minister. After a long searching in several locations of the island they thought the man was killed or died. In the course of time their hunger soared into a high level and they were desperate to find out the body of the minister to eat:

We wished to have the body of our pastor and were looking for it for long time. The minister lost his way in the bushes for his own stupidity. We wanted to find him out from the bushes to eat him as food which would make us stronger. Apart from that, people say, human flesh tastes very sweet.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Van der Hedien, *Vernaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 34

⁷⁹ It is not sure whether iguana was founded in Asia at that time especially in that coastal island of the Bay of Bengal. Iguana is an herbivorous genus of Lizard is founded in tropical areas like Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean.

⁸⁰ See Van der Hedien, *Vernaerlyke Schip-breuk*, pp. 40-70

⁸¹ Van der Hedien, *Vernaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 48

Van der Heiden informs that out of extreme hunger, they had also planned to kill their own people and eat their flesh. First they selected a relatively young boy to kill. But later changed their plan as they feared that if it would have happened once, the practice would be continued which might be deadly for all of them:

Some people suggested tasting one of the boys but thanks to God it did not go so far. If that would have happened once, and had we the taste of it, it would be continued undoubtedly. It has already been said that to save our life we needed to eat human flesh. Therefore, at that night we went to sleep with fear.⁸²

The theme of cannibalism runs long. The author tells that they attempted to kill some black people and a black woman. They had a fight with the black men. Two of the blacks were injured but managed to escape. They relieved the black woman as she was too sick and had little flesh in her body to eat.⁸³

The cannibalism theme comes up again and again in this book. In the last part of the book the author recounts that they had a chance to meet an ambassador and people from a cannibalistic state, which was a neighbouring region of Assam. He says that these anthropophagus came to the nabab out of intimidation: they feared to be attacked by the Mughal army. They offered assistance to the Mughals for their war against Assam. The author and the other Dutch men were curious about anthropophagus. He gives a detail description on the nature and character of these *menscheneters* or anthropophagus:

Although very lively and quick with their savage and ferocious face, this was an amazingly savage kind of people... Therefore the Moors used to avoid them. It was just like that they wanted to eat people immediately. They eat human flesh most of the time. They do not burry dead people, but both dead people and half dead people and also who had little energy to live, were served as foods. Their belief in common property was unpleasant to the Moor merchants. For their particular belief they would put their hands on everything what they like and took that in their possession... they were completely attached to their belief... in their country no goods are sold.⁸⁴

⁸² Van der Hedien, *Vernaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 48

⁸³ See Van der Hedien, *Vernaerlyke Schip-breuk*, pp. 66-7

⁸⁴ Van der Hedien, *Vernaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 124

One may question: why Van der Heiden was so inclined to report on cannibalism? This theme was perhaps very popular in Europe at that period. We observe that many other travel literatures during the century and also later centuries reported the practice of cannibalism in different parts of the globe. But we do not know clearly whether any practice of cannibalism existed in Mughal India. Some other European sources, for instance the Portuguese, reported about the existence of cannibalism in India. The Mughals also considered the people of Assam as man-eaters. However, the idea of cannibalism is itself a highly contested theme. Till date a spate literatures have been produced on the issue. Several anthropologists and historians have challenged the existence of cannibalism. W. Arens in his profound work, *The Man-eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagi*, has criticized the theme of cannibalism.⁸⁵ For Arens, the idea of savage cannibalism has scant or no empirical base. He argues that it was basically an attribution to the 'Other'. European tried to show the 'Other' as savage who were engaged in cannibalism. This imputation on the non-western people, later, gave a moral justification of penetration, colonialism, massive killing and torture in colonial countries. The point Arens emphasizes here is now well known to us as 'Orientalism' what Edward Said has suggested in his influential work *Orientalism*.⁸⁶ However, Arens does not discard that anthropophagy might happen out of starvation and he also does not completely discard the 'ritual anthropophagy'. But the central to Arens' argument is that the overall data indicates that the imputation of man-eating to other world was essentially from western obsession. The historian Anthony Pagden has also criticized the cannibalism theme. In his magisterial monograph, *The Fall of natural man: The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*, Pagden investigates how European philosophical and popular values such as its obsession with cannibalism used to define the human status of the people of South America and Mexico.⁸⁷

Arens and Pagden were later criticized by several anthropologists and historians. The French historian Frank Lestringant is the most powerful critic of Arens and Pagden. In his book *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne*, Lestringant criticized Arens by terming him a 'sensation-hungry journalist than an exact historian'. He argues that the denial of cannibalism, 'under the cover of idealism and intellectual high-mindedness', actually leads back to the

⁸⁵ W Arens, *The Man-eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979)

⁸⁶ See for details Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin press, 1977)

⁸⁷ See for details Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of natural man: The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)

misrepresentation of the other.’⁸⁸ He insists that evidences of cannibalism are available from ethnographic sources. For him, the refusal of the existence of cannibalism essentially means the refusal of Holocaust. He has criticized Pagden by saying that even ‘responsible’ scholar like Pagden have apparently fallen into the same trap, ‘spreading the denial of the cannibal through five continents’.⁸⁹

Gananath Obeyesekere in his recent work identifies the imputation of cannibalism to non-western people as European ‘myth-making’. In *Cannibal Talk: The man-eating myth and human sacrifices in the South Seas*, Gananath like Arens and Pagden demonstrates that European representation of non-western people as man-eaters or cannibalistic is from European obsession which emerged in the pre-modern time with the discovery of America.⁹⁰

But does Saidian and postcolonial discourse really fit with Van der Heiden’s account? Can his representation of Assamese as Cannibal be seen as *Orientalism*? Does his narrative make the Assamese ‘other’? It is difficult to apply Saidian discourse in this case, especially, when Van der Heiden does not exclusively talks about the Assamese cannibalism but also gives a detail account of their own cannibalism.

Knowledge on coastal village and town

Before *Vervaerlyke schip-breuk* was published not many European travelogues informed about the remote Indian villages and cities. Most of the travellers visited big cities and ports. Van der Heiden provided a vivid picture of coastal villages and towns of Bengal. As we have seen, after Van der Heiden and his fellow shipwrecked men were rescued by the fishermen from the desolate island they found them in a coastal village of Bengal named Sondip. It was a small village and was not much populated. Houses were small and mushroomed in a particular place which was in the middle of the village. The author compared the houses of Sondip with that of the old people’s house in Amsterdam. He gives us a magnificent picture of the village:

‘We came to a large gate and were allowed to enter into the gate. When we were there, it seemed to us that the houses here are made almost like the old home in Amsterdam. The construction and design of

⁸⁸ Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The man-eating myth and human sacrifices in the South Seas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005)

⁸⁹ Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk*, p. 3

⁹⁰ See Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk*

the houses are just like old home in Amsterdam: in the middle they kept a big open space and around this big space small houses were made in a circular way.⁹¹

The village headman whom the author called as *Orangkay* received them warmly. They were treated with very good quality of rice, milk and various kinds of meat such as cattle meat, ox meat etc., banana, jackfruit, honey and other foods made with tasty spices. The author and his friends were too impressed by this friendly behaviour of the *Orangkay*:

‘... We all, twenty eight men, after five days of our stay in the village Sondip, said good bye to the *Orangkay*, the headman of the village, and thanked him for everything good he did for us. Then we called the skipper. The *Orkangkay* was a Bengali man, a very good man; because among the Bengali people and Muslim one can find many good people...’⁹²

The book also provides information on rural economy. The author gives description on local market and agricultural commodities. The local market was very close to headman’s house. It recounts that different kind of commodities like banana, honey, chickens, beef, fishes, eggs, spices and textiles were sold in an incredibly cheap price in that village market.⁹³

After their departure of Sondip for Dhaka, the Dutch men halted at a coastal town, which the author mentioned as Bolwae. The name of the small Bengal town, perhaps, comes distortedly in *Vervaerlyke schip-breuk*. However, from his description of the town it seemed likely that this was a Mughal *thana* or military post Bhallua, a south-eastern part of eastern Bengal, present day Bangladesh. A *thanadar*, head of the Mughal military post and several hundred soldiers were placed there in order to response any sudden attack from the Arakanese and other intruders who often penetrated in the south-eastern part of Bengal and as far as Dhaka. These intruders used to plunder property and wealth, vandalize the areas and kidnap people for slave trade. This *thana* also used to work as a military logistic supply station for the Mughal military campaign against the Arakanese settled in Chittagong. Van der Heiden depicted *thanadar* of Bhallua as a hospitable person. Like Sondip, at Bhallua they were warmly received by the ‘prince’ or the Mughal *thanadar*. They were treated with precious and good quality of food. As he writes:

⁹¹ Van der Hedien, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 74

⁹² Van der Hedien, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 92

⁹³ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, pp. 74; 92

‘There we were treated with costly spicy food, such as *Brensie*, the food for kings and princes. And according to the body guard [of the prince] we were provided the best food at any standard’⁹⁴

The author, here, offers a description on local court of the Mughals. He informs that the court here was very luxurious. On the fifth day of their stay in Bhallua, they witnessed a large assembly. People from different neighbouring villages and towns came to attend the assembly. They saw many soldiers armed with sword, shields, arrows, arches and belly cutters. When all the courtiers took their places, the ‘local prince’ or *thanadar* appeared in the hall. They sat in a special style with their leg crossed. The assembly continued from morning till the evening. When *thanadar* and his high courtiers left the hall Van der Heiden and the other shipwrecked men tried to know the reason of the assembly.⁹⁵ From higher to lower, the Mughals used to follow almost the same court rituals. Harbans Mukhia shows that hierarchically lower and local court always tried to replicate the etiquette, rituals and grandeur of the imperial court.⁹⁶

He informs that the Christians, for some ‘unknown’ reasons, were popular among the Mughal nobles. He reports that the *thanadar*’s guard was consisted of many higher ranked Christian. In the region of this ‘prince’ if anyone would introduce him as a Christian he would easily get job as a soldier. However, the author suspected that these were Christian only in name. They were ‘het slechts zwarte Portugezen’ or the bad black Portuguese. We can easily presume that here by ‘bad black Portuguese’, the author meant the natives who were converted to Catholicism by the Portuguese.⁹⁷

Knowledge on religion and customs

The author made a general observation on religion, customs and culture of the people of Bengal, Assam and its neighbouring states. He made reference to three particular religions such as Gentile and Indian Heathenism, and Islam.

⁹⁴ Van der Hedien, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 100

⁹⁵ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 101

⁹⁶ For detail see Harbans Mukhia, *The Mughals of India* (United Kingdom: Balckwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 156-71

⁹⁷ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 101

The book recounts that considerable number of rowers in the Mughal army was the follower of Genitive religion or Indian Heathenism.⁹⁸ He noted that the follower of Genitive and Heathenism had food restriction. Because of the religious restrictions they were not permitted to eat all the foods they would get, even though they were so hungry. He tells the readers that they had two Genitives in their boat. Their physical condition was much vulnerable. These men were forced to join the war. When the Dutch offered them food and clothes, they refused saying that they wanted to die and would be saved if they die. The author says that they found to their surprise that two men, follower of Genitive religion, did not eat beef as they believed cow as their God.⁹⁹ He informs that that the people of Assam regarded cows as their God and thus did not dare to slain and to eat them even they would perish out of hunger.

Van der Heiden also gives vivid description of a religious temple in Assam. According to his account, he along with other Mughal soldiers plundered one of the temples in Assam.¹⁰⁰ The temple, according to his description, was very beautiful and richly decorated with gold. His description goes:

“Two miles upstream between Lokkwae [Lakhau]¹⁰¹ and Geraghan [Garh-gaon]¹⁰², we found a stronghold (fort) which we have conquered. We found a precious temple within the boundary of fort with a nice tower (because elsewhere there was no tower). And in this temple we found an exceptional big cow of pure gold as booty. When we would buy cows from them we had to promise always beforehand not to kill them.”¹⁰³

According to Van der Heiden religion of the people of Assam was full of superstitions. He was also surprised to observe the practices prevailing among the followers of Heathenism in this area. The author found that when a Genitive or heathen rich landlord would die, he was buried along

⁹⁸ Van der Hedien, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 126

⁹⁹ Van der Hedien, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 126

¹⁰⁰ Plundering after and during the war, especially when the army would become sure about their victory was very popular among the imperial army. We have several instances of this kind of plundering by the Mughal army. As William Irvine observes, ‘There was also an undisciplined eagerness to break off and begin plundering before the day was really decided; and this habit often ended disastrously for those who had too easily assumed themselves to be the victorious.’ See William Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls: Its organization and administration* (New Delhi: Eurasian Publishing House Private Ltd, 1962), p. 236

¹⁰¹ Lakhau was some eighteen miles north-west to Garh-gaon.

¹⁰² Garh-gaon was the capital of Assam

¹⁰³ Van der Hedien, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 127

with his property such as gold, money and other precious metals. Not only precious metal but the Genitive and Heathen were buried along with their servants. He informs that the Mughal army knew the custom which tempted the soldiers to dig many graves for precious materials. As author's describes:

In Geraghan [Garh-gaon] many crypts of landlords and elites were found. According to their custom they were buried along with much treasure. When a rich Genitive or Heathen landlord passes away he is brought and kept into a cellar with much treasure. His slaves and servants were also put into the cellar alive. After which they close the cellar and burry. In this way they suffocate them alive. The buried elite thus are appeased hoping to arrive in another world on the third day in much more glorious status... The nabab ordered to open these graves and got immeasurable treasures from there.... The nabab got 39 hundred tons of gold from the all the graves.¹⁰⁴

The book offers a vivid portrayal of the Bengali people and Muslim in particular. According to the author Bengali people have very little idea about distance. For instance, when the author and his other friends were passing by a village, they asked the inhabitants: did they know how far the camp of the Mughal army? Some replied that to reach the camp they would need to travel thirty miles but some other people told that the distance was 10 miles. Some people replied by showing their finger into the sky. The Muslims always used to take oath in the name of God and bite their finger's front. However, he remarks that besides this, these people were very nice. They were not thievish or deceitful.¹⁰⁵ The author also informs of a popular custom of Muslims in Bengal. The Muslims would celebrate new moon with much festivities:

‘On the day of new moon the Moors used to shoot cannons on the water and land around. This is because they honour the new moon very much. And also on that day the money for paying of the soldiers would arrive.¹⁰⁶

Information on the Mughal army and Warfare

¹⁰⁴ Van der Heden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 129

¹⁰⁵ Van der Heden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 104

¹⁰⁶ Van der Heden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 125

As we have seen in the introductory chapter that after Van der Heiden and other shipwrecked Dutchmen arrived at the Dutch factory in Dhaka, the second person of the factory made all the arrangements for their further trip to Hugli. But at the last moment by the nabab's request the shipwrecked Dutch men had to join the Mughal army for fifteen months. No doubt this was an unlucky and unfortunate incident for the Dutchmen. But this event later appeared as a welcoming episode for the author and his reader. From his experience as a conscripted soldier, he acquired valuable first-hand knowledge of the war field. Thus, he was able to dispense such important information on the Mughal field warfare, particularly in eastern limit which very few European literatures managed to supply. This part is perhaps the most important section of the book.

Van der Heiden along with other shipwrecked friends started their journey from Dhaka to join the Mughal field army. It was a long and enervating trip which took more than a month. They travelled both by inland and overland passing many villages and several towns of Bengal. On their way they had also the chance to meet native people. But most of the village and towns they passed by were evacuated. They noticed with profound wonder that on average 19 houses out of 20 were barren. The author later revealed that this mass evacuation occurred due to the marching of the Mughal army. He writes that the Mughal army used to force the civilian to join the army during the wartime; even it would not bother to conscript those who were merchants.¹⁰⁷ Therefore when the army would pass by a village or town, the inhabitants would evacuate the total area to escape conscription. He also informs that during the wartime economy of the areas was disrupted greatly.¹⁰⁸

In *vervaerlyke schip-breuk* the author provides a detailed description about the Mughal army and the weaponry used in the war. He informs that the Mughal field army of Bengal was very large and strong consisted of many soldiers: foot, cavalry, and standards and naval. He informs that the Mughal navy was one of the strongest forces of the army. Naval force was comprised of several kinds of war boats and including accompanying supply boats. Among the war boats *Goeraps* is notable. Every *Goeraps* had several skippers or sailing masters, three steersmen, some boatmen and few body guards. Besides, there were some rowers as well. In total a *Goeraps* contained seventy people. In each *Goeraps* there were twelve to fifteen cannons including a 'princely' or a large cannon. *Goeraps* were accompanied by light but a kind of long war-boats which were called *Koffen* each contained about sixty wheels. The *koffen* had three or four small cannons fixed on the board.¹⁰⁹ He

¹⁰⁷ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 104

¹⁰⁸ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 104

¹⁰⁹ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 107

noted that thousands of *keffens* participated Mir Jumla's campaign to Assam and Kuch Bihar. There was another kind of war boat which is called *Korrebattel*, a large flat belly boat, from where by insistent firing naval force could provide useful support to the infantry in case of any disadvantageous situation. He also reported that apart from war boats some other boats accompanied the Mughal army. A good number of *koopman* boats or merchant boats and boats of the whores or concubines sailed behind the war boats. He mentions that the higher Mughal officials used to keep concubines and brought them with the fleet. The author reported that the nabab himself had one thousand concubines.¹¹⁰

Van der Heiden recounts that apart from naval power the Mughal army had very strong infantry or foot soldiers. He, thus, provides a detail description of the strength of Mughal infantry and cavalry:

‘This mercenary army both in water and land has moved to war with the king of Assam. I heard for several times from credible people that this army was estimated as eight hundred thousand... The cavalry was amazing to see. It was organized in rows each contained three hundreds which was splendid to look at. Cavalry would split from the two sides at the same time. And the nabab drove from the middle with his force.’¹¹¹

Van der Heiden then continues to describe the strength of Mughal infantry and cavalry:

‘The slaves who were white Russians were on the horse back and followed by nabab. ‘The cavalry also drove close and behind the nabab. The infantry or foot soldier which was very large and strong armed with muskets, cutters, arrows and bows and pikes was marching behind the cavalry. The giant war elephants, large number of camels which were driven by constables sitting on the back of elephants and camels were followed by foot soldiers. The elephants and camels were also skilled in warfare and could do a lot of destruction...’¹¹²

The author also gives a detailed picture of the war fought between Assamese and the Mughal army. He informs the cruel nature of the war which cost many lives for the both sides. War prisoners were badly tortured, killed and heads were cut off from the body and hanged up in the trees to

¹¹⁰ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 107

¹¹¹ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 108-9

¹¹² Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 109

intimidate the enemies.¹¹³ Dead bodies polluted the water and the environment near the Mughal tent.¹¹⁴

The author says that the nabab led the campaign. He informs that although the nabab was aged, he was an able man full of splendour and vigour - all the qualities a good war commander is entailed.¹¹⁵ The *subahdar* of Bengal is also depicted as a hospitable person who had good trust and respect on the Dutch men. He writes that the Dutch people were welcomed by the nabab in his tent and were treated with strong arak. According to him it is quite unlikely for an ordinary soldier to enter into the nabab's tent and have drink with the nabab. The nabab also praised the Dutch men a lot for their courage.¹¹⁶

Van der Heiden gives description about the difficulties involved in the campaign of Assam and Kuch Bihar. Military campaign in the Indian subcontinent, especially in eastern limit of India, was much dependent on the weather. The author noted that the Mughal army was initially in a good position. But when the monsoon started and flood visited the areas, the army was pushed into back foot. It had to suffer a lot for scarcity of food and water. The supply chain was disrupted due to rain and monsoon floods. Diseases broke out and many soldiers perished from water borne diseases. But when the monsoon ended and the floods receded the Mughal army again came to its own vigour. As the author writes:

‘Guerguon [Garh-gaon] is an extremely beautiful town and it has exceedingly beautiful ladies... In the meantime the monsoon started earlier than normality to the bad luck of Emir [nabab Mir Jumla]. The rain in these areas is very heavy. And it covers all the land during the times of three months, except the villages which are built on the high places. So the army of the nabab gets in a great trouble.’¹¹⁷

Other historical literatures also inform that during that particular campaign of Mir Jumla, monsoon rain and flood cut the communication with the Mughal *thana* situated on the northern frontier of Bengal from where military logistics and supplies were provided to the army.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 123

¹¹⁴ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 127

¹¹⁵ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, 109

¹¹⁶ Van der Hedien, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p.105

¹¹⁷ Van der Hedien, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, pp. 131-2

¹¹⁸ For detail treatment of Mir Jumla's Assam Campaign see Sir Jadunath Sarkar (ed.), *The History of Bengal: Muslim Period, 1200-1757*, vol. II (Dhaka: Dhaka University Press, 2006), p. 295-97

Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling also offers detailed information on different background of the soldiers of Mughal army and about their payments. The author informs that the Mughal army was a mercenary army comprised of native Bengali, Persian, English, Portuguese and Armenian soldiers.¹¹⁹ Van der Heiden notes that European soldiers were paid better than the native soldiers. Among Europeans, the Portuguese and British soldiers were the best paid. He writes that they [the Dutch] were less paid than the Portuguese and the British as the latter were free willing soldiers but on the contrary the Dutch were conscripted soldiers. The salary of British soldiers was fixed as fifty rupees and a 'white Portuguese' soldier was supposed to get fifty or forty rupees a month. However, the 'black Portuguese' [native who were converted to catholic and were thus regarded as the subject of Portugal] were paid thirty, twenty or even ten rupees per month. A cavalry soldier would get relatively higher salary which was fifty rupees per month for both himself and his each horse. However, the foot soldiers were the most less paid. Francois Bernier's, a French traveller, in his description of the payment of the Mughal army also mentions that the foot soldiers were the less paid members of the army.¹²⁰ It was also announced that if any soldier could bring a head of an enemy soldier, he would be paid fifty rupees per head. And if any soldier could bring an enemy soldier alive, he would be paid hundred rupees per war-prisoner. The soldiers were also offered booty. However, the promise was not kept duly.¹²¹

How do we evaluate the information of *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling*?

How do we evaluate and properly appreciate the information which the author of this book gives on Bengal, Assam and Mughal warfare? We will first see how historical works and other contemporary sources on the particular period and event corroborate Van der Heiden's information. Do the historical context and literatures corroborate his information? How practical is it? I will make an attempt to examine some of the information that the book supplies.

As we have seen, the author provides description of one particular campaign of the Mughal *subahdar* or nabab Mir Jumla to the neighbouring states of Bengal: Assam and Kuch Bihar. For long time the Mughals attempted to establish control over Assam. Before this specific campaign, the

¹¹⁹ Van der Hedien, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 125

¹²⁰ Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 217

¹²¹ Van der Heiden, *Vervaerlyke Schip-breuk*, p. 106; 111, 125-6

Mughals launched several military campaigns to pacify and take these regions under its sway. But all the prior campaigns were futile. In fact, in their earlier military campaigns to these regions, the Mughals had some bitter and shameful experiences. One such instance of futile military expedition is the campaign of 1615 under the governorship of Qasim Khan. In that campaign the Mughals were defeated by the Ahom or Assamese army. The Mughal camp was vandalized. The army lost almost all of its military equipment. Majority of the soldiers were killed and very few managed to escape. Their higher military officers like Sayyid Hakim, Sayyid Kasu, Jamal Khan Mankali and Lachmi Rajput lost their lives. Chief war commander Aba Baqr was also killed.¹²² This was a huge embarrassment for the prestige of the Mughal army.¹²³

After Mir Jumla was appointed as the governor of Bengal and Bengal saw relative stability, the governor of Bengal was asked to set out military campaign to Assam and Kuch Bihar. Mir Jumla too was keen to undertake this campaign since successful military campaign would bring reputation and also scope for earning huge money as booty. It would also open the opportunity of plundering of the enemy state. Mir Jumla started his campaign to northern region, Kuch Bihar and Assam, in late 1661 which ended in January 1663.¹²⁴

As we have seen Van der Heiden informs that the Mughal army comprised of many European soldiers and the majority of the Europeans were the Portuguese and English. He informs that Europeans were paid higher than the natives. Bernier informs the European employment in Mughal artillery. He observes: ‘the artillerymen receive great pay, particularly all the Farangis or Christian, Portuguese, English, Dutch, German and French, fugitives from Goa and from the Dutch and English companies.’ Bernier also informs us the reason behind good payment of the European soldiers. As he notes: ‘Formerly, when the Mogols were little skilled in the management of artillery, the pay of the Europeans was more liberal, and there are still(1658) some remaining, who receive two hundred rupees a month, but now the king admits them with difficulty into the service and

¹²² Sarkar (ed.), *The History of Bengal*, p. 295-97

¹²³ For detail description of the Mughal campaigns in Kuch Bihar and Assam see *Bahārīstān-i-Ghaybī* see Mirza Nathan, *Bahārīstān-i-Ghaybī: a history of the Mughal wars in Assam, Cooch Behar, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa during the reigns of Jahāngīr and Shāhjahān* trans. from the Persian, vol. I (Gauhati : Government of Assam, 1936)

¹²⁴ Sarkar (ed.), *The History of Bengal*, p. 350

limits their pay to thirty two rupees.¹²⁵ Irvine also shows the elevated position of the European soldiers in the Mughal artillery.¹²⁶

One may cast doubt on the information of the *Vervaellyke Schip-breuk*, when it speaks about the strength of the Mughal army and commenting on the number of the army. It is difficult to estimate the exact number of the Mughal army. Different sources provide different number. The number of the army, too, would vary from one campaign to another and one emperor to another. As William Irvine also says that it is extremely difficult to provide the accurate figure of the Mughal army. While *Ain-I-Akbari* gives the number of the army during the reign of Akbar as 42,62,315, the *Badshahnamah* put the number as 240,000 in the reign of Shah Jahan and Bernier reports the number during the reign of Aurangzeb as 255000.¹²⁷ The number of the Mughal army estimated By Van der Heiden in that specific campaign of Mir Jumla may be partly exaggerated. We do not have other sources which give the total figure of the Mughal army that participated in Mir Jumla's campaign. However, Jagadish Narayan Sarkar informs that a vast number flotilla of war boats, artillery, supply vessels, horses and foot soldiers participated in the campaign.¹²⁸ It is widely accepted that the Mughal army was reputed for its military might. Because of its military might a good number of historians have tempted to identify the Mughal Empire as the Gun Powder Empire. It seems plausible when the author informs the strength of the naval force. Given the geographical features of eastern Bengal, the Mughals in Bengal needed to have a strong naval force: Bengal was crisscrossed by numerous rivers, dikes and canals. We have already seen that the author describes how naval force was organized: the force was led by *Goeraps* and followed by *koffen*, flat belly boats, and merchant and concubine boats. Historians also suggest that the Mughal naval forces in eastern Bengal consisted of different war boats and merchants boats. The war boats were followed by the merchant boats for supplying food and some other logistics needed by the army.¹²⁹ His depiction of the Mughal cavalry as the strongest force may be a bit exaggeration. The Mughal cavalry was very strong in other region. But it was not extraordinarily effective in this region. The Mughal army in eastern limit of the empire

¹²⁵ Francois Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, p. 73, 217

¹²⁶ See for detail William Irvine, pp. 153-4

¹²⁷ Irvine, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls*, pp. 60-1

¹²⁸ Jagadish Narayan Sar kar, 'MirJumla in Bengal, 1659-166' in Sarkar (ed.), *The History of Bengal*, p.346

¹²⁹ See Gommans, *The Mughal warfare*, p. 175

should have to combine naval and land forces to get the highest success. As Jos Gommans observes, 'the Mughal ascendancy [in Bengal] was due to the combined operation of land and river forces'.¹³⁰

One may question the number of nabab's concubines given by *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling*. Maintaining concubines was an important part of the Mughal culture. The Mughal chroniclers and court historians provide vivid and juicy descriptions of the Mughal harem and concubines. All the Mughal emperors possessed many wives and a good number of mistresses¹³¹ and concubines in their harems. Keeping concubines in the medieval or Mughal culture would mean no embarrassment rather it was an emblem of aristocracy, grandeur and political power.¹³² Concubines were no less important in the Mughal harem. The Mughal chronicles proudly recount the story of the famous concubines. They obtained respected position. Some of them were very adorable to the nobles and princes. Their position in the harem was behind the royal women and mistress. Some of the concubines were also married to the nobles, princes and even to the emperors. Abul Fazl, one of the esteemed Mughal chroniclers says that every concubine had their own luxurious apartment.¹³³ However, till date large debate remains among the historians about the number of concubines in the Mughal harem. The number provided by court historians and travellers varies from one another. Contemporary chronicles shows the number of concubines as modest during the reign of Babur and Humyan. But from Akbar the number rises dramatically. For instance, Abul Fazl put the number of women in the emperor's harem as 5000, in which concubines constituted a large number. It was not the emperor who only had harem. The Mughal nobles had harems and possessed large number of wives, mistresses and concubines. For instance, Akbar's one of the favourite nobles, Man Singh possessed 1500 wives and many concubines, says *The Tuzak-I-Jahangiri*.¹³⁴ However, R.N Prasad in his study on Man Singh does not accept the figure given by *Jahangiri*.¹³⁵ Thus, the figure of the nabab's concubines, as 1000, provided by *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* is not abrupt and illogical.

Conclusion

¹³⁰ Gommans, *The Mughal warfare*, p. 174

¹³¹ Mistress was also like concubine but mistress was one rank higher than that of concubine.

¹³² Mukhia, *The Mughals of India*, p.114

¹³³ However, some historians for instance K.S Lal and Harbans Mukhia cast doubt on Abul Fazl account and find his description as exaggeration. But they too accept the special position of the concubines in the Mughal family world. See for detail, K.S Lal, *The Mughal Harem* (New Delhi : Aditya Prakashan, 1988), pp. 38-41; also Mukhia, *The Mughals of India*, pp. 113-55

¹³⁴See Mukhia, *The Mughals of India*, p.114

¹³⁵ R.N Prasad, *Raja Man Singh of Amber* (Calcutta: World Press, 1966), p. 130

From the preceding discussion we have seen that the book, *Vervarelyke Schip-breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling*, provides important and useful knowledge on Bengal and Assam and particularly information on the Mughal army and warfare. Not many European or even Asian sources provide such detailed accounts of Mir Jumla's Assam campaign and close observation of the Mughal army. Several primary sources and historical studies on the Mughal Empire also corroborate the plausibility of the information of the book.

Conclusion

The thesis raised and investigated the question: Apart from its partly sensational description did *Vervarelyke Schip-Breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling*, knowledge on Asia, particularly India? The thesis finds the book provides important, useful and to some extent new information on India, particularly Bengal, Assam and the Mughal army and field warfare. We have seen that the author of our present book made his journey to India in September 1661. On the way of his journey he got shipwrecked on the coast of Bay of Bengal. Subsequently he and other shipwrecked Dutch men encountered misfortunes and terrible ordeals. However, because of the shipwreck the author of the book had an opportunity to experience the coastal villages and cities of Bengal. He, thus, provides valuable information on the villages and cities, society, economy, culture and customs of Bengal.

We have observed that at one stage of their adventurous and unfortunate journey, the author and the other shipwrecked men were conscripted and served as soldiers in the Mughal army for fifteen months. There the author had a chance to observe the Mughal army and warfare closely. Thus the book provides important information on the naval forces, infantry and cavalry, the background of the soldiers, their monthly wage and so on.

The study shows that the book provides important knowledge on Assam and Kuch Bihar. As during the service in the Mughal army the author visited Assam, Kuch Bihar and some other regions, he had an opportunity to observe the society. He informs about Genitive and Heathenism: rituals and customs of the Genitives and Heathens. The followers of these two religions had some 'strange' practices which surprised the author. The Genitive and Heathens regarded cow as their god. The rich Genitive and Heathen landlords were buried along with precious materials and their servants alive. He also comments about ritual and customs of the Muslims.

A substantial part of the book deals with the cannibalism theme. It informs about the cannibalistic practice of a neighbouring territory of Assam. We do not know clearly that whether cannibalism was existed in India at that period. Some other European sources also, for instance the Portuguese, informed about the existence of cannibalism in India. The Mughals were too supposed to believe Assamese as cannibalistic. However the theme cannibalism is highly contested issue. Several historians and anthropologists have challenged it.

In fine the thesis argues and demonstrates that beyond all its limitation the so far neglected travel account, *Vervarelyke Schip-Breuk van 'T Oost-Indisch Jacht Ter Schelling* generated considerable knowledge or information on India which can be useful for historical writings. It is perhaps true that

the book sometime tends to give sensational description but one cannot deny the importance of the book because of it. In fact this was the popular style shared by the seventeenth century travel account. The information provided by this book may open new perspective for studying history of this region or at least can supplement other sources. What Lach and Van Kley remark on the book: 'Van der Heiden's tale may well be fictitious' and 'fiction or fact, Van der Heiden's popular book contributed no new information about Asia' seems unjustified. In fact they were unable to justify the real merit of the book.

There is a vast scope for the future researchers to do a comprehensive study on the seventeenth-century Dutch travel account written on Asiatic region, especially on India, to unravel the importance of such kinds of resources and appreciate properly.

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