

## Fortunes at Sea: Mediated Goods and Dutch Trade, Circa 1600\*

*Claudia Swan*

Consider the ubiquity of European ships in the early modern era. Ships outfitted for transport and to gratify commercial interests, imperial zeal, and military aims traversed oceans, sailed straits, and navigated rivers across the globe. As a vehicle, the ship enjoys an extensive history, but in the early modern era, technical advances and interest in establishing European presence far afield of the Mediterranean motivated the construction of increasingly complex mechanisms, which enabled new itineraries across the globe. In the sixteenth century, Spanish and Portuguese fleets explored new worlds east and west; flotillas and armadas massed to engage foes. In the seventeenth century, state-sponsored companies supported the construction and voyages of fleets from the Netherlands, England, and France that traversed the Indian and Atlantic Oceans; and the grim and wide-reaching slave trade, too, emerged in this era and depended on merchant ships. Ranging from enormous vessels with populous crews, such as those of the Dutch and English and French East and West Indies Companies, to simple dinghies and horse-drawn passenger boats across the European continent, ships were everywhere, and the most complex of their time were vehicles of astonishment, castles of the sea. In the late seventeenth century, a German pastor aboard a Dutch ship wrote of ‘our ship, which seemed more a castle than a ship; those who had never seen anything like it were utterly amazed by such a structure and stared, their eyes almost glued to it—as the saying goes, like a cow faced with a new gate.’<sup>1</sup> Diego García de

\* To Christine Göttler, Susanna Burghartz, and Lucas Burkart I am deeply grateful for the invitation to present my research in Basel and the encouragement to develop it in writing. My initial encounter with Francesco Carletti occurred while in residence at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, in 2013–2014, and I am profoundly indebted to Lorraine Daston and Sven Dupré for affording me the intellectual freedom to explore this and other off-topic subjects. I thank, too, David Freedberg, Wolfram Kaiser, Linda and Peter Parshall, Jon Swan, and Huib Zuidervaat for their feedback, and Sandra Racek for her assistance, while taking full responsibility for any errors of judgment or fact.

1 Hoffmann Johann Christian, *Ost-Indianische Voyage; Oder eigentliches Verzeichnüs [...]* (Kassel, Johann Friedrich Hertzog: 1680) 11: ‘[...] unser Schiff, welches mehr ein Kasteel, dan

Palacio, author of a nautical instruction manual, compared a sailing vessel to the human body:

this machine or labyrinth that we know of as a ship [...] seems to me the perfect semblance of a man ... because its hull is like the body: the rigging and cords, like the nerves; the sails, like the many little flaps of skin and tendons in the body; the main hatch like the mouth. The ship also has a belly and related organs to purge and clean itself, like those a man has; the people [on board] are like the soul, the principal officers are like the governing faculties [of the soul].<sup>2</sup>

That a ship, the vessel of early modern global expansion, could sustain comparison with the most highly regarded creation of God (man) as in de Palacio's 1587 *Instrucción nautical* is only one indication of the significance of ships in the early modern landscape—metaphorical and actual.

As regards images of ships, it is no exaggeration to state that the early modern pictorial field is a sea of them, especially in the Netherlands, where the seafaring success of the young Dutch Republic was avidly commemorated in pictorial records of the vessels responsible for their success in trade and war alike.<sup>3</sup> The series of ten prints of *Sailing Vessels* issued in the 1560s by the great Antwerp publisher Hieronymus Cock—by Frans Huys after designs by Pieter Bruegel [Fig. 14.1]—set a precedent amplified by an astonishing number of marine pictures and seascapes produced in the Netherlands after 1600 [Fig. 14.2]. From images of tranquil harbours to turbulent evocations of ships caught in terrifying squalls, and across media from prints to paintings and from pen paintings to luxury objects, depictions of ships came to

---

ein Schiff zu seyn schiene, die nun dergleichen niemehr gesehen, verwunderten sich über ein solch Gebäw zum höchsten und sahen es mit fast un verrückten Augen, und, wie man sagt, ein Kuh ein neu Thor an'. I first encountered this text as it is cited in Gelder R. van, *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur: Duiters in dienst van de VOC (1600–1800)* (Nijmegen: 1997) 150; for assistance translating it I am very grateful to Jon Swan and Linda B. Parshall.

- 2 García de Palacio Diego, *Instrucción náutica para navegar* (Mexico City, Casa de Pedro Orcharte: 1587) fol. 87. Quoted by Pérez-Malaina P.E., *Spain's Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. C.R. Phillips (Baltimore, MD: 1998) 65.
- 3 On Dutch marine painting generally, see Bol L.J., *Die holländische Marinemalerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Braunschweig: 1973); Russell M., *Visions of the Sea: Hendrick C. Vroom and the Origins of Dutch Marine Painting* (Leiden: 1983); Giltaij J. – Kelch J., *Praise of Ships and the Sea: The Dutch Marine Painters of the Seventeenth Century* (Rotterdam – Berlin: 1997).

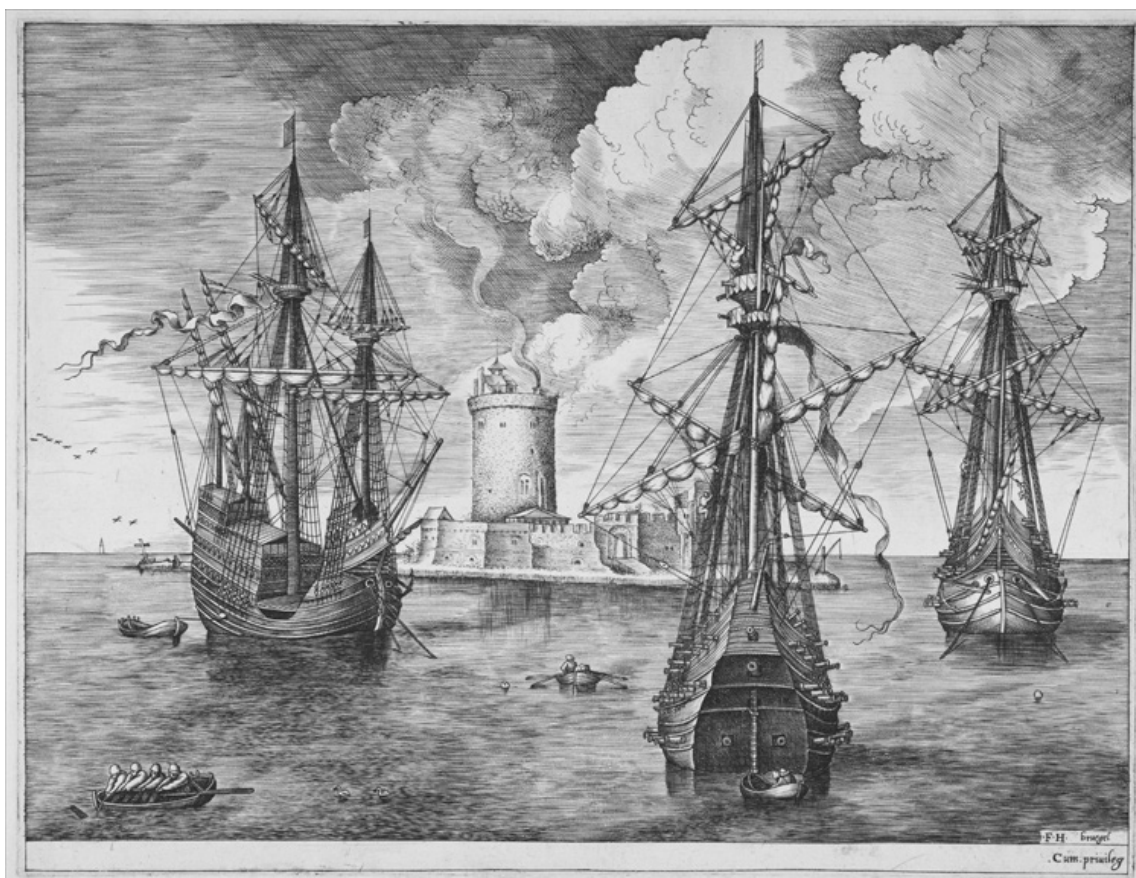


FIGURE 14.1 *Frans Huys after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Four-master and Two Three-masters Anchored near a Fortified Island, from the Sailing Vessels (Antwerp, Hieronymus Cock: 1561–1565). Engraving and etching, first state of three, plate: 22.5 × 29.4 cm, sheet: 27.8 × 33 cm. New York, NY, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. no. 59.534.23).*

IMAGE © THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK, NY,  
BEQUEST OF ALEXANDRINE SINSHEIMER, 1959.

represent a new mode of mediating, experiencing, and understanding the world [Figs. 14.3, 14.4].<sup>4</sup>

The Dutch painter and printmaker Reinier Nooms (1623–1664), also known as ‘*Zeeman*’ on account of his experience as a sailor, produced numerous images of ships on the water—from triple-masted cargo ships (*fluiten*) suitable for trade in the Baltic and ferries that offered intra-city fare to the frigates and East Indiamen built for longer trajectories and more substantial cargoes

4 On the anthropology of naval architecture, see Siebert B., “Waterlines: Striated and Smooth Spaces as Techniques of Ship Design”, in *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real*, trans. G. Winthrop-Young (New York, NY: 2015) 147–163.



FIGURE 14.2 *Hendrick Cornelisz Vroom, Return of the Second Voyage to the East Indies, under the direction of Jacobus van Neck, the Mauritius, Hollant, Overijssel en Vrieslant (1599). Oil on panel, 55.9 × 91.4 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. SK-A-2858).*

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

[Fig. 14.5]. Amazing masses of ships crowd harbour views and vessels pepper the watery terrain of early modern maps. The 1599 painting by Cornelis Vroom of *The Return of the Second Voyage to the East Indies* [Fig. 14.2] documents the reception given the fleet returning from the East Indies to Amsterdam: bumper to bumper boats and their passengers populate the Amsterdam harbour, heralding a new era—and the makings of a new state, the Dutch Republic, built on the riches derived from overseas trade. Wenceslaus Hollar's series of etchings *Navium Variarum Figurae et Formae* (1647) with its taxonomic depiction of twelve different views of vessels—including many tremendous East Indiamen, at various stages of construction and commission—offers a seventeenth-century update of the Huys-Bruegel series. The title page of Hollar's series [Fig. 14.6] shows what look to be a sailor and a merchant standing in awe before the title vignette of the series, disguised as the decorated hull (the '*spiegel*') of one of the 'warehouse-vehicle-fortresses' that enabled the trade and defined the horizons of the time.

Long trips in unknown waters became a reality in the late fifteenth century because of a new construction, the full-rigged ship, which 'incorporated the advantages of southern construction methods and the triangular lateen





FIGURE 14.3 *Willem van de Velde, A Ship on the High Seas Caught by a Squall, Known as 'The Gust' (ca. 1680). Oil on canvas, 77 × 63.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. SK-A-1848).*

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.



FIGURE 14.4 *Spice box with coat of arms of Prince Maurits (ca. 1600). Silver, 17.6 × 124 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. BK-NM-4313).*  
IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

sail with the hull form and the square rail of northern European types.<sup>5</sup> The design of merchant ships known as ‘*naos*’ (Genoese) or ‘*naus*’ (Portuguese), large cargo vessels well suited to transporting cargo from Africa and India to Europe, was adapted by Flemish shipwrights and their Dutch counterparts over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Dutch *fluit*, a

5 Unger R.W., “Marine Paintings and the History of Shipbuilding”, in Freedberg D.A. – Vries J. de (eds.), *Art in History/History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture* (Santa Monica, CA: 1991) 75–93, 77. See also Haalmeijer H. – Vuik D., *Fluiten, katten en fregatten: De schepen van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, 1602–1798* (Bloemendaal: 2002); Daalder R. – Spits E. (eds.), *Schepen van de Gouden Eeuw* (Zutphen: 2005).



FIGURE 14.5 *Reinier Noomans, Four Dutch sailing ships, two of which are fluiten, inside a fence near the shore (1705). Etching, 19.1 × 29.7 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (inv. no. RP-P-1887-A-11974).*

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.



FIGURE 14.6 *Title page to Wenceslaus Hollar, Navium variae figurae (London, B. Cleynhens: 1647). Etching, 14.6 × 23.8 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (inv. no. RP-P-OB-11.343).*

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.



long, slender vessel built for trade, carried grain and timber to the Netherlands from the Baltic; the so-called *Moedernegotie* conducted there served in turn to fund the voyages of the Dutch East and West India Companies alike.<sup>6</sup> The seventeenth century saw the development of a multidecked, heavily rigged, three- or four-masted vessel; referred to by a variety of terms (*schip, jacht*), it came to be known for returning goods from the East Indies as a *retourschip* (lit. 'return ship'; East Indiaman).<sup>7</sup> East Indiamen, the vessels that comprised the fleets sent by the VOC and the WIC, are famous for their trajectories and for their exploits, and feature prominently in travel accounts and other representations.

The image of ships sailing through the Pillars of Hercules in the title page of Francis Bacon's 1620 *Instauratio Magna* is canonical within the iconography of the scientific revolution. As Juan Pimentel has demonstrated, this image, usually taken to herald a new terrain of knowledge, resonates with the title page of an earlier, Spanish navigational manual (Andrés García de Céspedes, 1606) [Figs. 14.7, 14.8]. Referring to the relationship between these images as a 'splendid coincidence,' Pimentel specifies that 'the image [of the ship sailing between the pillars of Hercules] is used in the Anglo-Saxon tradition to represent increase of knowledge [...] while in the Iberian tradition it represents knowledge gained through discovery and conquest of the New World'.<sup>8</sup> What actual ships enabled came to be emblemized in representations of ships: discovery, knowledge, power. As Sven Dupré and Christoph Lüthy have observed, with reference to these very title pages, 'Naval circulation led to a circulation of knowledge and in due time became an emblem of the rapid increase in scientific knowledge'.<sup>9</sup> Recently, in a brilliant analysis of the rise of the marine seascape in the Netherlands, Bernhard Siegert has proposed a new conception of 'the relations among painting, piracy, techniques of navigation, and nation

6 The fundamental reference is Boxer C.R., *The Dutch Seaborne Empire 1600–1800* (London: 1965).

7 Parthesius R., *Ships in Tropical Waters: The Development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Shipping Network in Asia, 1595–1600* (Amsterdam: 2010) esp. chapter 5: "The Development of the VOC Fleet" 65–93.

8 Pimentel J., "The Iberian Vision: Science and Empire in the Framework of a Universal Monarchy, 1500–1800", *Osiris* 15 (2000) 17–30, at 24. Another instance of a title page featuring a ship is Linschoten Jan Huygen van, *Itinerario: Voyage ofte schipvaart van Jan Huyghen van Linschoten naar Oost ofte Portugaels Indien* (Amsterdam, Cornelis Claesz: 1596), where a vessel sails into the foreground, and four vignettes surrounding the central image contain city profiles of Antwerp, Amsterdam, Enkhuizen, and Middelburg.

9 Dupré S. – Lüthy C., "Introduction: Silent Messengers. The World of Goods and the Circulation of Knowledge in the Early Modern Netherlands", in Dupré S. – Lüthy C. (eds.), *Silent Messengers: The Circulation of Material Objects of Knowledge in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Berlin: 2011) 5.





FIGURE 14.7 Title page to Francis Bacon, *Instauratio Magna: Multi petrasibunt et augebitur scientia* (London, J. Billium: 1620). Engraving. Chicago, IL, Newberry Library (FB 49.059).

IMAGE © NEWBERRY LIBRARY, CHICAGO, IL.



FIGURE 14.8 Title page to Andrés García de Céspedes, *Regimiento de nauegación q[ue] mando hazer el Rei nuestro señor por orden de su Consejo Real de las Indias a Andres Garcia de Cespedes su cosmografo maior, siendo presidente en el dicho consejo el conde de Lemos* (Madrid, Casa de Juan de la Cuesta: 1606). Bloomington, IN, Lilly Library.

IMAGE © LILLY LIBRARY, INDIANA UNIVERSITY, BLOOMINGTON, IN.

building'.<sup>10</sup> According to Siegert, the emergent nation state is represented by the very ships—and images of ships—that secured the territory: 'the *chorein* [passage] of the Dutch inscribed itself in the form of the Dutch seascape of the late-sixteenth, early-seventeenth century'.<sup>11</sup> In other words, in the early modern era and especially around the turn of the seventeenth century, ships and representations of them went hand in hand with the development of new forms of commerce, interaction, and nationhood.

Is it far-fetched to consider the early modern ship a site of mediation? At its broadest, the noun 'mediation' denotes practices intended to reconcile opposites or to intercede between parties or concerns; the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'mediation' in the first instance as 'agency or action as a mediator; the action of mediating between parties in dispute; intercession on behalf of another'.<sup>12</sup> Certainly ships were sent in the spirit of conflict resolution: Diplomatic envoys, for example, set out with the specific intent of resolution by mediation. Many early modern ships traversed space and time (water being their medium, we might say) in order to negotiate, where the peaceful resolution of dispute was not a primary aim, but trade or warfare were. The *OED* lists as a second definition of 'mediation', 'Agency or action as an intermediary; the state or fact of serving as an intermediate agent, a means of action, or a medium of transmission; instrumentality'. This definition would seem to apply to early modern ships that mediated or enabled mediation between agents of political and mercantile interests, for example. Instrumentality and transmission are key here, qualifying the relationship between agents or objects and concepts as a process that is *not* immediate, and is potentially fraught, fractured, diffuse. Raymond Williams reminds us in his invaluable examination of keywords for cultural analysis that, in a Marxist context, mediation tends to presuppose irreconcilable differences.<sup>13</sup> Media studies, as practiced by Friedrich Kittler, for example, analyse mechanisms of transmission and the various processes of mediation they entail or inform—modulation, transformation, synchronisation, delay, storage, transposition, scrambling, scanning, mapping, for example.<sup>14</sup>

10 Siegert B., "The *Chorein* of the Pirate: On the Origins of the Dutch Seascape", *Grey Room* 57 (2014) 6–23.

11 Siegert, "The *Chorein* of the Pirate" 8.

12 "Mediation, n.", *OED Online*, March 2016, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/115665?redirectedFrom=Mediation> (accessed: 06.05.2016).

13 Williams R., *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York, NY: 1976) 204–207.

14 Kittler F.A., *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. and introduction G. Winthrop-Young – M. Wutz (Stanford: 1999) 2.



Returning to early modern ships, let us think of them as vehicles of mediation—vessels that reconciled geographical differences and vessels that generated processes and relations we can comprehend under the rubric of mediation.<sup>15</sup> The commerce transacted in the East Indies by Europeans, for example, depended on ships to reach, secure, and deploy such sites of mediation as Goa or Bantam—key trading posts in the early modern era. In the formative years of the global Baroque, the constellations traced across the waters by European ships were the product and the source alike of a variety of sorts of mediation, interaction, and entanglement. The remainder of this essay presents a series of mediations undertaken in the name of trade around the turn of the seventeenth century. These mediations—negotiations, miscommunications, disputes—occurred in the context of Dutch trade overseas; they are mediated here by an account written in Florence in 1605.

In the first decade of the seventeenth century, the Dutch secured a foothold in intra-Asian network trade—trade the VOC sought out and administered, on behalf of the state in formation, the emergent Dutch Republic. This is heralded in Vroom's depiction of the return of the fleet [Fig. 14.2]; commemorated in a ship-shaped silver spice cellar produced ca. 1600 [fig. 14.4]; and celebrated in such images as the panoramic 1611 city view of Amsterdam [Fig. 14.9]; in which a veritable forest of masts darkens the edges of the built city, and an array of imposing vessels populate the harbour. This paean to a city still in formation presents Amsterdam as a global trade hub, calling it 'de wijtvermaerde Hooft-Coop-stadt des gantschen Weerelts Amsterdam' ('the widely renowned capital of trade of the entire world, Amsterdam').<sup>16</sup> In the accompanying text to a slightly earlier print, the city of Bantam is described—much like Amsterdam—as a 'vermaerde Coopstadt' or 'renowned emporium,' and the source of

spices such as pepper, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, mace, ginger, and so on as well as medicinal drugs, precious stones, such as diamonds, rubies, turquoises, emeralds, sapphires, and others, and also pearls and many

<sup>15</sup> The history of the slave trade and the technicalities of transport by ship exceed the scope of this paper, but might also be considered a form of mediation, albeit a grisly one. See, *inter alia*, Postma J., *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815* (Cambridge: 1990).

<sup>16</sup> Letterpress text belonging to Claes Jansz. Visscher and Pieter Bast, *Profile View of Amsterdam, seen from the IJ* (1611). Cf. Fig. 9. See Bakker B. – Schmitz E. (eds.), *Het aanzien van Amsterdam: Panoramas, plattegronden en profielen uit de Gouden Eeuw* (Bussum: 2007) plate 1, cat. no. 60; Chong A., "Contained Under the Name of Still Life: The Associations of Still Life Painting", in Chong A. – Kloek W. (eds.), *Still Life Paintings from the Netherlands 1550–1720*, exh. cat., Cleveland Museum of Art and Rijksmuseum (Zwolle: 1999) 11–38, at 19.



FIGURE 14.9 *Claes Jansz. Visscher and Pieter Bast, Profile View of Amsterdam, seen from the IJ (1611). Etching and engraving with letterpress text on 16 sheets, 25.6 × 115.4 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (inv. no. RP-P-AO-20-22). Detail of the two center sheets.*

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.

other countless strange curiosities, that are found only in the East Indies [Fig. 14.10].<sup>17</sup>

Here too, in this image, ships figure prominently—indeed, this is not technically a city view, though the text does describe the city and its value to the Dutch: This is a depiction of a naval battle between the Dutch and the Portuguese for control of the port that took place around Christmas time 1601. Technically, Dutch merchants and, as of 1602, the VOC, waged trade, not war. All too often, the line between the two was a very fine one. The naval battle described in print and text follows on and epitomizes earlier skirmishes between the Dutch and the Portuguese, going back to 1599. Indeed, the establishment of the Netherlands as a global economy and the European entrepôt for trade from

17 *Claes Jansz. Visscher, View of Siege of Dutch Ships at Bantam, 1603 or 1608, engraving and etching, 36.5 cm x 50 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. no. RP-P-OB-80.599). The full title opens: 'Uvarachtighe Afbeeldinghe vanden wonderbaren ende ghedenckwaerdighen Scheeps strijdt ende slaghe / welcke in Oost-Indien / int gesichte van de vermaerde Coopstadt Bantam gheschiet is [...].'*



FIGURE 14.10 Claes Jansz. Visscher, Dutch Victory over the Portuguese at Bantam (1603). Engraving, 42.7 × 86.3 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet (inv. nos. RP-P-OB-75.312; RP-P-OB-75.313; RP-P-OB-75.314).

IMAGE © RIJKSMUSEUM, AMSTERDAM.





the East and West Indies depended on the mechanisms of war and piracy as much as on the entanglements of trade. The remainder of this essay offers a case study, the story of one merchant's travels and travails that exemplify the extent to which mediation governed the seas in the early modern era.

The first private voyager to circumnavigate the globe was the Florentine merchant Francesco Carletti (1573–1636). His exploits and encounters are preserved in the form of an account he wrote on his return to Europe after nearly twenty years, his *Ragionamenti* or *Chronicles*.<sup>18</sup> In 1591, at the age of eighteen, Carletti travelled to Seville under the apprenticeship of a Florentine merchant, Nicolo Parenti; and in 1594 Carletti and his father, who had joined him in Spain, set sail for South America, nominally under the protection of the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinando I de' Medici (1549–1609). Insofar as the young Florentine aspired to furnish the Grand Duke with curiosities from the east, he ventured abroad on the model of Francesco Sassetti, who supplied Ferdinando and his brother Francesco with medicinal goods and '*galanterie*' from India, where Sassetti lived between 1584 and his death there in 1588.<sup>19</sup> In 1598 Carletti and his father reached Macao, where his father died; Carletti subsequently began to make his way home. When he returned to Europe in 1602, he did so in a manner entirely contrary to his aims and ambitions and within tenuous reach of the extensive lavish goods he had procured along the way. He returned on a ship outfitted by Dutch merchants, which had captured the Portuguese vessel on which Carletti departed from Goa in December 1601; and after landing in Middelburg, in Zeeland, whence the Dutch ships had sailed east, Carletti spent more than two years fighting an extensive legal battle to regain his goods. He was unsuccessful. On his return to Florence late in 1605, Carletti composed an account of his travels in an effort to preserve his honour. Addressed and dedicated to Ferdinando I, Carletti's account—the *Chronicles*

18 The *Ragionamenti* were written for the Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici. The original text is Codice 1331 T.3.22, Biblioteca Angelica, Rome. I have consulted the Italian transcription: Carletti Francesco, *Ragionamenti del mio viaggio intorno al mondo*, ed. A. Dei (Milan: 1987); and the English edition: Carletti Francesco, *My Voyage Around the World*, trans. H. Weinstock (New York, NY: 1964). See also Sgrilli G., *Francesco Carletti: Mercante e viaggiatore fiorentino, 1573–1636* (Rocca San Casciano: 1905); Roelofson C.G., "Het trieste slot van een reis om de wereld in het begin van de zeventiende eeuw: De affaire Carletti", *Mededelingen van de Nederlandse Vereniging voor Zeegeschiedenis* 20 (1970) 13–30; Russo R., *Con Carletti intorno al mondo* (Bari: 2008).

19 Karl B., "'Galanterie di cose rare . . .': Filippo Sassetti's Indian Shopping List for the Medici Grand Duke Francesco and His Brother Cardinal Ferdinando", *Itinerario: International Journal on the History of European Expansion and Global Interaction* 32 (2008) 23–41. I am also very grateful to Katie Heyning of Middelburg for sharing her notes on Carletti.

or *Ragionamenti*—tells of his life abroad, his decision to quit the slave trade that served as the initial impetus for his wide travels, and his fateful encounters with the Dutch on his return to Europe from Goa. It would not be an exaggeration to refer to Carletti's *Ragionamenti* as the chronicle of a series of mediations; ironically, his failure to mediate his fortune successfully may have given rise to this extraordinary text.

In the 'Fourth Chronicle of the East Indies,' one of the final chapters of his *Ragionamenti* or *Chronicles*, Carletti describes life in Goa, Portuguese trade in the East Indies, and the politics of Asian trade with specific reference to recent changes in the balance of power.<sup>20</sup> Goa had served as the capital of the Portuguese viceroyalty since 1510, and had become the preeminent mercantile hub for Europeans trading in the East Indies by the time Carletti arrived there in March 1599. Carletti remained in Goa longer than he had planned, awaiting a shipment of merchandise he had purchased in Macao that was delayed by weather.<sup>21</sup> The goods he had bought in Macao, after his father died and he resolved to return to Florence, included raw silk, silk thread, and silk for needlework; 'a great quantity of musk'; gold, which he specifies is 'a sort of merchandise and is used more for gilding one or another kind of furniture and other objects than as money'; silk accoutrements; porcelain, including jars filled with preserved ginger; china root; a Chinese geographical atlas (preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence); and 'various other curious things' intended for the Grand Duke—more on these goods shortly.<sup>22</sup> Of the Indies and of the city Carletti writes,

there is no other region in the world in which it is possible to live better and more lavishly, and particularly in the city of Goa, in which there are many businesses that, without any loss on exchange in going and returning, earn from twenty-five to thirty percent at the beginning of each year

20 See Carletti, *My Voyage* 201–226; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 172–189.

21 Carletti, *My Voyage* 202; for his description of Macao and his purchases, see 144–150. See also Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 131–136, 173.

22 Carletti, *My Voyage* 148–149 for a description of the bedroom silks; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 135 ('And of the abovementioned silk—that is, of those twists, good for sewing and in all the colors that can be imagined, light as well as dark—I had them make a bed—the curtains, that is, with also all the accessories and furnishing for a room [...]. And that design was of various fantastic animals, birds, and flowers.'). See Karl B., "'Marvellous Things are Made with Needles': Bengal *colchas* in European Inventories, c. 1580–1630", *Journal of the History of Collections* 23 (2010) 301–313, on Carletti see esp. 306.



or, to say it better, at the end of the voyages [...] to Zoffala, Mozambique, Ormuz, China, and the Moluccas, and also to Bengal.<sup>23</sup>

While waiting for his goods from Macao, Carletti resolved to sell the silk he had in hand. He did not sell directly, but sent the silk to the Indian city of Cambay, 'where it was sold and earned me seventy per cent and more of what it had cost me in China'.<sup>24</sup> From Cambay, 'by way of a merchant of the Gujarati nation with whom I had correspondence,' he received linens he intended to sell in Europe, along with

bedcovers embroidered with curious, very beautiful designs in workmanship of a fineness rarely seen, which they also work on silk fabric. And I also had them send me a goodly quantity of things made of mountain crystal and other varieties of stones, such as blood agate, milk agate, and the like.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, intra-Asian trade depended on a series of cautiously negotiated mediations.

In Goa, Carletti was ideally positioned to make the most of the information and trade networks spun throughout the East Indies by the Portuguese over the course of the preceding century. He describes the splendours of Moghul Emperor Jahangir, for example, on the basis of 'a letter sent by a Jesuit' who travelled from Lahore to Agra with the imperial procession.<sup>26</sup> In addition to lavish lists of the goods that were brought to Goa, Carletti's *Chronicles* offer a vivid, racy even, description of the life of a merchant 'at ease in the city'. Merchants were 'always engaged in festivities, songs, music, games, and balls,' while their commands for wares were filled throughout the intra-Asian trade network by captains they engaged.<sup>27</sup> The Portuguese 'live very lavishly and comfortably in Goa,' Carletti writes, 'going about constantly on horseback (the horses being brought from Persia with the ships from Ormuz, and from Arabia)' and are always accompanied by 'goodly troupes of slaves'.<sup>28</sup> Of the array of exquisite goods that arrived at Goa, many were installed as decoration for the houses of the Portuguese residents there.

23 Carletti, *My Voyage* 222; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 186–187.

24 Carletti, *My Voyage* 202; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 173.

25 Carletti, *My Voyage* 202–203; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 173.

26 Carletti, *My Voyage* 203; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 173.

27 Carletti, *My Voyage* 223; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 187.

28 Carletti, *My Voyage* 206–207; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 176.

From China comes everything good and beautiful which could be desired in the way of very rich adornments of gold and silk, beds, chests, tables, cabinets, and chairs, all gilded and with a black varnish that is made from a substance taken from the bark of a tree that grows in China and which at first flows like pitch, but then becomes so hard that it repels water and so shiny that one can use it as a mirror. And all this is very beautifully decorated.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to this lacquer ware, whose manufacture Carletti attempts to capture while praising its products, the Portuguese homes were also outfitted with porcelain, he writes: 'They eat everything from Chinese porcelain and, what is better, their foods are entirely made of exquisitely flavoured birds.'<sup>30</sup> Carletti's sumptuous description of local culture and cuisine, of slaves and loves, of porcelain and poison, and of beautiful mestizo children of Portuguese fathers and Chinese, Japanese, Javanese, Moluccan, and Bengali mothers is redolent of the entangled, cosmopolitan, highly mediated culture, and society Asian markets engendered.<sup>31</sup>

Although Goa produced no indigenous wares other than coconuts, Carletti writes, 'nonetheless it overflows with every delight and every kind of goods, which are brought there from all sections of those Indies and Oriental regions of which (that is, of whose harbours and traffic) the Portuguese are in control'.<sup>32</sup> While describing Goa as a global hub, Carletti also points to a crucial shift: Whereas, he wrote, the Portuguese had long dominated the trade in goods trafficked from the east to Europe via Goa, other European nations were threatening to gain a stronghold. With regard to the trade dynamics Carletti describes, and the relative loss of their foothold by the Portuguese, he mentions no nation more frequently than the Dutch. (He had, as we shall see, every reason to judge the Dutch most merciless in the pursuit of profit and exotic goods.) Goa continued to thrive at the time he described it, but East Indian trade was no longer solely in Portuguese control: 'many years ago the Dutch and the English and the French took away from them, one could say, the traffic of the Moluccas,

29 Carletti, *My Voyage* 207; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 176.

30 Carletti, *My Voyage* 207; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 176–177.

31 See Maillard N., *Voyages en abyme: Lecture ethnologique des Ragionamenti del mio viaggio intorno al mondo de Francesco Carletti, marchand florentin (1573?–1636)*, Recherches et travaux de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, Université de Neuchâtel, Faculté des Lettres 5 (Neuchâtel: 1985) <http://doc.rero.ch/record/232913/files/MaillardN1985RT5.pdf> (accessed: 05.01.2016).

32 Carletti, *My Voyage* 219–220; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 185.

whence come cloves, nutmeg, mace, pepper, and other sorts of merchandise of those regions'.<sup>33</sup> Carletti specifies myriad ways in which European competitors, prime among them the Dutch, diminished Portuguese trade. 'Also ruined is the traffic with China,' on account of prices being higher,

because of the abovementioned Hollanders and others [who], having gone there with their multitudes of ships, have reduced everything to lower prices, buying with money of account those things which the Portuguese bought at a profit in exchange for cotton cloths from Negopatan [Negapatam], Manipore, and Coromandel.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, according to Carletti, by 1605 the Dutch had infested the whole of the elaborate Asian network trade—by entering with cash rather than gradually; by way of bypassing the longstanding intra-Asian network trade of goods; and by 'preying upon the carracks that ply to and from Lisbon'.<sup>35</sup> Carletti describes Portuguese trade in the Indies as intrinsically profitable; the value of the coins, the *reales*, he remarks, was fifty percent higher in India than in Lisbon. Notably, he also characterizes the trade in Asian exotica as the signal accomplishment of the Portuguese:

[it] is the splendour of all that Orient and [it] caused and still causes the whole world to marvel and is the greatest thing of usefulness accomplished by the Portuguese [...]. On those items incredible profits were and still are made by means of the merchandise that they send from Goa to Portugal on the aforementioned carracks, which ordinarily leave in the month of December, as also in that of January.<sup>36</sup>

The Dutch 'infest those seas and keep them in continuous fear'.<sup>37</sup> To make matters worse, Carletti reports, they were also shifting the balance of trade values in the Levant: 'Similarly, they have frightened those who trade through Ormuz, an island at the entrance of the Persian Gulf.'<sup>38</sup> On Carletti's account, the Dutch interference in trade in the East Indies and beyond threatened Portugal's national renown, as well as its investment and profit.

33 Carletti, *My Voyage* 219–220; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 185.

34 Carletti, *My Voyage* 220; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 185.

35 Carletti, *My Voyage* 220; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 185.

36 Carletti, *My Voyage* 220–221; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 185.

37 Carletti, *My Voyage* 221; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 185.

38 Carletti, *My Voyage* 221; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 186.



Carletti's *Ragionamenti* or *Chronicles* was written in an attempt to secure his honour, and records the fate of his worldly goods—which he lost doubly: first, in spring 1602, when the Portuguese carrack on which he had secured passage back to Europe from Goa was captured by Dutch ships outfitted by the *Verenigde Zeeuwse Compagnie* (United Zeeland Company, one of the forerunners of the VOC); and second, when the Admiralty Court of Middelburg determined in August 1602 that the entire cargo of the *San Iago* was 'good prize' and property of its claimants, the United Zeeland Company.<sup>39</sup> Following the arrival of his goods from Macao, Carletti secured passage to Lisbon on the outgoing vessel the *San Iago*, which departed Christmas morning 1601. Carletti arranged with the captain of that ship for a space aboard where he 'could set up a bedroom or living quarter, in which a bed was to be placed for sleeping indoors' as well as 'a space for stowing my merchandise, which I had mostly in large cases'. Carletti took along with him three servants—'one of the Japanese nation, a Korean, and the other a Mozambique Negro'—and 100 chickens, 'which were excellent in every way', for consumption when meat was served. He paid for these spaces, in amounts he recounts in detail, also explaining how such space, 'conceded by the King, once his pepper has been loaded, to each officer and sailor,' was allocated and leased. Many such spaces, he writes, 'are available, and on everything that can be accommodated in them no customs are paid either in India or in Lisbon'.<sup>40</sup> The *San Iago* sailed past Madagascar and around the Cape of Good Hope, on to St. Helena. Although no provisions were needed, the captain was under royal orders to meet other ships in the fleet arriving from Cochin. The *San Iago* reached St. Helena on Friday, 14 March and anchored according to instructions in what was deemed a safe position. Immediately, however, and in fulfilment of various portents Carletti names in his telling, two ships approached—the *Zeelandia* and *Langebercke*, from Zeeland, under the immediate command of Cornelis Bastiaensz and Nicolaes Anthonisz, respectively, and under the general command of Laurens Bicker.<sup>41</sup> These East Indiamen, outfitted by the United Zeeland Company, had sailed east from Middelburg prior to the founding of the VOC in Amsterdam in 1602,

39 For the most comprehensive account of the legal affair, see Ittersum M. van, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595–1615* (Leiden: 2006) esp. chapter 3: "Why was *De Jure Praedae* Written" 123–151.

40 Carletti, *My Voyage* 228; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 190. On the slaves, see Schrader S., "The Many Identities of Rubens's *Man in Korean Costume*: New Perspectives on Old Interpretations", in Schrader S. (ed.), *Looking East: Rubens's Encounter with Asia*, exh. cat., The J. Paul Getty Museum (Los Angeles, CA: 2013) 1–23.

41 Unger W.S., *De Oudste Reizen van de Zeeuwen* (The Hague: 1948) 46.

and were returning to Zeeland laden with pepper. They also carried members of the court of the Sultan of Atjeh on what has been described as ‘the first diplomatic mission of a southeast Asian polity to Europe’.<sup>42</sup>

Though it is unclear who instigated the conflict between the Portuguese and the Dutch vessels, it is certain that, once engaged, the Zeelanders did not let up in their effort to capture the *San Iago*. According to Carletti’s report, panic broke out on board the *San Iago* when the Zeelanders approached and, ‘with no direction or sense of what with some reasonableness could be done (notwithstanding the fact that the ships came more in a display of war than one of peace)’ the captain fired at the Dutch ships.<sup>43</sup> They ‘decided to wait no longer, for it seemed to them only too certainly an invitation in response to the desire that they had, which was to fight’, he writes. ‘And perhaps beyond doubt they had set about stirring things up that way so as to have an occasion to seize upon.’<sup>44</sup> Although he claims that it would take an author with the playwright Andrea Salvadori’s abilities to describe the battle that followed, Carletti offers a robust description of the nearly three days of fighting, at the conclusion of which the *San Iago* was on the brink of sinking—and the Portuguese surrendered to the Zeelanders.

From St. Helena, Carletti secured passage to Zeeland, where his confidence that his goods would be restored to him on arrival was sorely broken, and he returned empty-handed to Florence three years later. The story is a dramatic one, and bears on the development of early modern global trade. It is directly relevant to the matter of how the Dutch acquired the status of merchants of the exotic in the early years of the seventeenth century, and of how property came to be defined by the Dutch in the context of expanding trade. The capture of the Portuguese trade vessel by the United Zeeland Company ships ‘stirred up a hornet’s nest of political and legal issues’.<sup>45</sup> Among other things, it inspired the design and production of a commemorative medal; a lawsuit that dragged on for three years and involved local and international powers; and it influenced the legal scholar Hugo Grotius, whose treatise on trade and war

42 Mitrasing I.S., *The Age of Aceh and the Evolution of Kingship 1599–1641*, Ph.D. dissertation (Leiden University: 2011) 87.

43 Carletti, *My Voyage* 231; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 193.

44 Carletti, *My Voyage* 231–232; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 193: ‘Sentito le nave questo saluto, non la volsero più cotta, e le parve loro un invite pur troppo a preposito al desiderio che avevano di combattere, et che forse senza dubbio andavano in quell modo attizzando per aver occasione di pigliarci.’

45 Ittersum, *Profit and Principle* 123.

in the East Indies, *De Jure Praedae*, he composed in response to a subsequent significant capture of a Portuguese ship by Dutch East Indiamen.<sup>46</sup>

While space does not permit an examination of the act of state-sponsored piracy that gave rise to Grotius's treatise *De Jure Praedae*, it is worthwhile examining the capture of the goods aboard the *San Iago* and their fate in some further detail. After the Portuguese surrendered, the Zeelanders made their way on board and, according to Carletti, offered a conflicted apology: 'they made a ceremony of consoling us for what had happened, saying that they were sorry about it and putting the blame for it upon us, who had been the first to provoke it by the artillery shot set off by the captain of our ship.'<sup>47</sup> The Zeelanders stated openly that they had no letters of marque, or permission from their admiral, Prince Maurits, or the States General, to capture other nations' vessels, and that they had only fought because they were attacked first. They agreed to preserve the lives of the passengers on the *San Iago* in exchange for the goods aboard the ship, if the ship survived the night. The ship was in a terrible state and taking water: Its principal cargo, pepper, was strewn about during the fighting and 'the pumps or bilge-removers could no longer be used, having become clogged by the pepper floating on the water and entering into them'.<sup>48</sup> The Portuguese were to deliver all jewels on board to their captors; and the Zeelanders in turn promised to repair the ship in order to enable the Portuguese to make good on their agreement to render the goods to them. As evening fell, Carletti convinced an Italian-speaking scribe to take him to the Dutch ships straight away; this bargain was possible, Carletti notes, because of the precious goods he had with him:

I told him that I had many jewels and much other stuff ready to hand which we could carry with us, thus removing it from that danger—and, in particular, more than 2,000 ounces of musk (of which 1,600 were mine)

46 A medal that commemorates the capture of the Portuguese vessel by the Zeeland ships survives, and was recently recorded as being in the collection of the Koninklijk Penningkabinet, Leiden. See Liedtke W., *Dutch Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: 2007) vol. 1, 218, fig. 57. The Koninklijk Penningkabinet is, however, defunct and the present whereabouts of its holdings unclear. On *De Jure Praedae*, see also (in addition to Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*), Fruin, R.J., *An Unpublished Work of Hugo Grotius's* (Leiden: 1925) and Borschberg, P., *Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese, and Free Trade in the East Indies* (Singapore: 2011).

47 Carletti, *My Voyage* 236; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 196.

48 Carletti, *My Voyage* 237; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 197.



and the little structure in which the bed was, with other curious things that I was bringing to Your Serene Highness.<sup>49</sup>

The following day, the *San Iago* was miraculously, according to those still on board, afloat: indeed, 'the carrack was shipping less water than earlier because the pepper was interfering with the force of water entering through the holes'.<sup>50</sup> Pepper was the King's cargo and the primary motivation for the spice trade conducted by the Portuguese and, in turn, the Dutch and others. In this remarkable story, it plays numerous roles in addition to instigating the voyages and itineraries of such carracks as the *San Iago*: When the ship took water it clogged the pumps but, in time, it clogged the holes through which the water has entered the vessel as well. Carletti does not make much of the ironies here, but the fate of goods more generally is as variable and as inconsistent as the peppercorns. Later, in passing, Carletti describes the waters in which the two Zeeland East Indiamen the *Langebercke* and the *Zeelandia*, the Portuguese *San Iago*, and a third Dutch ship, the *Witte Arend*, from Amsterdam found themselves after the battle and the surrender as a floating bazaar. The spectacular description is worth citing and explaining. The *Witte Arend* did not enter the battle between the Zeelanders and the Portuguese, in adherence with the instructions under which it sailed, and the prohibition against the use of force except in the case of self-defense.<sup>51</sup>

Though it had not fought because it could not, [it] nonetheless collected a large booty in merchandise [*un buon bottino di mercantie*] and various things that had been thrown into the sea in order to lighten the carrack [...] the sea having been all covered with silk in skeins and in cloths, with carpetings and infinite other goods, of which that ship, with little trouble, was able to re-collect as much as it wanted [...].<sup>52</sup>

Imagine: The sea itself delivered the goods, merchandise described as loot, to neutral bystanders. A sodden site of mediation, indeed!

49 Carletti, *My Voyage* 237–238; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 197 ('Lo scrivano della nave capitana' is translated in the English edition as 'the mate of their flagship'. He is first mentioned in Carletti, *My Voyage* 236); Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 196–197: '[...] e la casetta dove era il letto, con altre cose curiose che portavo a V.A.S'

50 Carletti, *My Voyage* 238; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 197.

51 Ittersum, *Profit and Principle* 125.

52 Carletti, *My Voyage* 243; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 201.

After repairs had been made to the *San Iago*, the Zeelanders encouraged the Portuguese to leave the ship—but did not provide sloops on which they could make passage to the shore or to the Zeelanders' ships. A number jumped overboard but could not swim; those who made it to the Zeelanders' sloops had to pass their unsheathed swords. Carletti describes another means to obtain passage, concocted by his Korean servant on the spot. For all manner of reasons, not least because of the role that images play in the salvation of this servant, but principally because of the dynamics of mediation at play, the passage merits citation at length.

Whoever was clever, whoever was able, in the midst of those dangers, to place a chain of gold or pearls around his neck or carry in his hands some cluster of diamonds, was received graciously by them [the Zeelanders], so that they could take all the things that he was carrying. And many saved themselves who would not otherwise have been saved.<sup>53</sup>

In other words, market goods could mediate personal salvation. 'But,' continues Carletti,

one of my servants, of the Korean nation, played a trick on them despite the fact that he did not know how to swim and was aware that they were not accepting servants or slaves like himself. Around his neck he hung two of my little pictures, one on which was depicted a crucified Christ, whereas the other was an *Ecce homo*, and both of them on copper. I still have them and value them highly because they were made by good artists in Japan, as well as because of the trick carried out by that servant of mine. Wearing them, he plunged into the sea and was quickly picked up by those sailors, who thought that he had something of great value to them. And when they saw what the things were, they gave them back to him, and as he was already in their boat, let him remain there, and thus took him to their ship, where he saved those pictures for me with very little difficulty because they, being mostly heretical Calvinists, did not wish to see pictures either of the saints or even of God Himself crucified.<sup>54</sup>

53 Carletti, *My Voyage* 239; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 198.

54 Carletti, *My Voyage* 239; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 198. These 'little pictures' ('quadretti, uno dove era dipinto un Cristo crocifisso e nell'altro un Ecce Uomo, ambi sopra rame') may have been Japanese copper images, related to those employed in *e-fumi* practices as

Like so much of Carletti's *Chronicles*, this passage illuminates the value of goods and lives in the context of East Indian trade—and in this case, it involves a sly joke. Moreover, it demonstrates the uses of Christian images made in Japan—three sorts of uses: by Carletti as private devotional images; by his Korean servant as a means for salvation by the greedy Zeelanders; and by Carletti as a sort of *ex voto* to commemorate the event he describes here.

In addition to these pictures, Carletti also managed to take porcelain with him aboard the Zeeland flagship, where he and fifty other men were housed in the hutch under strict watch en route from St. Helena. Having repaired the *San Iago* to the point that it could sail again, the Zeelanders sailed west, arriving twenty-three days later at the island of Fernando de Noronha off the coast of Brazil. Carletti describes surviving this passage and the horrendous food he and his fellow passengers received as a spell of good fortune.

I would have been in a bad way if good luck (*fortuna*) had not helped me by making me have with me one of those porcelain vases full of pears preserved in China, it having been among the many vases containing conserves which I had turned over to the Zeeland captain.<sup>55</sup>

Those in the hutch, he writes, were treated 'without any pity from those good persons who were happily enjoying the many gifts they had found on the carrack' ('Tanti regali che avevano trovato nella caracca').<sup>56</sup> The dispossessed goods were translated into gifts, which the Zeelanders 'found'—much as the *Witte Arend* had collected a goodly booty of merchandise. The status of prized goods was as fluid as the waters in which they changed hands. Carletti bargained and persuaded his way back to Zeeland from the coast of Brazil, by cooking some sort of seafoowl in a manner that made it not only palatable but delectable even, and by reminding his captors of the Grand Duke of Tuscany's control over the port of Leghorn (Livorno). When the ships sailed from Fernando de Noronha some of the Portuguese who stayed (in Brazil) warned Carletti that he would not be safe. His response? 'Where my goods go, I want to go with my body, come what may.'<sup>57</sup> Carletti arrived in Middelburg on 7 July 1602. His body and his goods were indeed in one and the same place, but

---

described, for example, by DaCosta Kaufmann T., *Toward a Geography of Art* (Chicago, IL: 2004) esp. chapter 10, "Designed for Desecration: *Fumi-e* and European Art" 303–340.

55 A confusing reference: Laurens Bicker was from Amsterdam. Carletti, *My Voyage* 240–241; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 199.

56 Carletti, *My Voyage* 240; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 199.

57 Carletti, *My Voyage* 240; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 199.



divided by the events of the preceding months and the claims laid to them by the Zeelanders. He was not the only one whose fate changed dramatically: He recalls in his *Chronicles* that when the *San Iago* made land, twenty days after the East Indiamen arrived, and was unloaded, it contained

much more wealth than they [the Middelburgers] had thought or could think, even though more than one fourth of it had been lost, for sure, and especially of the jewels, two-thirds of which had been stolen by whoever wanted them and by the very captains and other officers of the ships that had captured it.<sup>58</sup>

‘Those jewels,’ he continues,

were changing hands during those days, a good part of them going to those who had lost nothing and had had no part in that misfortune. And many who had been poor became rich, whereas the rich became beggars.<sup>59</sup>

Carletti repeatedly emphasizes the fluidity with which goods changed hands; with which, for example, merchandise became gifts; and with which owners were dispossessed and new owners made by taking those lost goods. He refers at one point to his efforts to conceive

a way of recovering the things that I had aboard the carrack that was taken as a prize by the two ships of the Zeeland merchants, who had been sent to India to trade for spices in the Molucca Islands, and not to act as corsairs.<sup>60</sup>

Things were exchanged by processes of capture (prize) and exchange (trade), and Carletti was left empty-handed. Once the returning fleet made land, the transfer of goods became a legal affair. Carletti recounts that he attempted first by friendly means to ‘recover [his] possessions’ but that he was encouraged to pursue legal means (‘the route of justice’) to defend his merchandise, which the Zeelanders ‘pretended to have acquired legally in the capture.’<sup>61</sup> The subject of the subsequent and last chapter, ‘The Sixth and Final Chronicle of

58 Carletti, *My Voyage* 244; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 202.

59 Carletti, *My Voyage* 244–245; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 202.

60 Carletti, *My Voyage* 246; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 202.

61 Carletti, *My Voyage* 245; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 202.

the East Indies' of the *Ragionamenti* is the lawsuit that ensued. Armed with letters he procured via an intermediary from the Grand Duke, Carletti set out from Middelburg in September 1602 and presented the letters directly to the Stadtholder Prince Maurits, who was at the time engaged in Grave, in Gelderland, which he freed from Spanish control that year. Maurits assured Carletti that he would support his cause, but also stated, 'he could do very little because this was a concern of the merchants, over whom he exercised no command'.<sup>62</sup> In addition to the support of the Grand Duke, whose neutrality and control of Leghorn (Livorno) were frequently cited to emphasize the importance of keeping him in good favour, Carletti also solicited the aid of the French ambassador to the States General Paul Choart de Buzanval (1551–1607), who was already making gestures on behalf of Carletti in August in The Hague.<sup>63</sup> (Henri IV, King of France, was married to Grand Duke Ferdinand's niece Maria de' Medici.)

Carletti's claims gave rise to a complex, international affair that stirred political and mercantile interests and passions alike. International affiliations proved insufficient, however, to counter the claims and the power within the United Provinces of the United Zeeland Company and the Admiralty of Middelburg. As Martine van Ittersum has explained, regarding the complexity of the situation and the difficulty Carletti faced, 'the province of Zeeland was, quite literally, on the frontline of the war with Philip III of Spain and Portugal and economically quite dependent on the Indies trade'.<sup>64</sup> The merchants of the United Zeeland Company were now operating as VOC merchants, as the companies had merged in March 1602. Having secured the *San Iago* and its contents, the Zeeland merchants to whom Carletti appealed amicably were resolved not to settle the matter out of court, and 'went all about the city saying that' the matter had to go to court because 'if they restored [his] things to [him] they would have to restore their things to all the others who, also being neutrals, had had interest in that carrack'.<sup>65</sup> The ensuing months brought intense diplomatic and legal parrying, on the part of all parties involved.<sup>66</sup>

62 Carletti, *My Voyage* 247; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 203.

63 See Rijperman H.H.P. (ed.), *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal van 1576 tot 1603*, vol. 12 ('S-Gravenhage: 1950) 89–90, no. 90 (2 September 1602).

64 Ittersum, *Profit and Principle* 139. See chapter 3, especially section 3.5, "Challenging the Verdict of the Middelburg Admiralty Court: Francisco Carletti" 139–150.

65 Carletti, *My Voyage* 250; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 205. Cited by Ittersum, *Profit and Principle* 140.

66 The resolutions of the Middelburg Chamber of the VOC regarding the return of the fleet and ensuing legal matters are published in Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 156–203 (chapter 4,

Inventories of the goods aboard the Zeeland vessels were drawn up, and a price for the pepper was set. The goods belonging to the Atjeh mission (cloves, indigo, and pepper) were accounted for, and a funeral for the emissary who died in Middelburg was arranged.<sup>67</sup> On 23 November the Middelburg Admiralty officially permitted the sale of goods, 'initially all of the damaged goods, and then porcelain, blankets, textiles, pavilions, bed coverings, wall hangings, and woven cloths'. The sale of the porcelain was to take place in the warehouse where it was kept, in packets of twenty small dishes and ten little bowls at a time; and the prices of ebony, raw silk, musk, cloves, mace, and cinnamon were likewise set. Over the course of the subsequent days and weeks the remaining goods were sold—among them, wet pepper, raw linen, cinnamon, saltpetre, camphor, galbanum, spikenard, cardamom. In January, all of the gold and silver aboard the *San Iago* was melted down and sold.<sup>68</sup>

Although a provision was made by the Admiralty on 25 November that the sale of Carletti's goods would cease until further decree, it is not clear what measures were taken to protect his goods, in the general rush to make good on the wares—wares that are referred to in several records of the Zeeland College of the Admiralty Board and the Zeeland Chamber of the VOC as 'booty'.<sup>69</sup> That the carrack and its contents—the 'booty' prized by the Zeeland merchants from their Portuguese enemies—were for sale was advertised across the land, by way of printed notices.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, particularly precious items were offered to various statesmen as gifts. In early October items were set aside 'to be presented', including spices, textiles, porcelain, bezoar stones, and musk. Prince Maurits received a 'golden throne with its accoutrements, a pavilion, a peacock

---

"De Reis voor de Verenigde Zeeuwse Compagnie, 1601–1603": C. "Gegevens betreffende de Afwikkeling van de Reis").

67 Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 184–185.

68 Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 195.

69 Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 174. See Ittersum, *Profit and Principle* 141. The word *buyt* or *beuyt* appears numerous times in the 1602/1603 documents transcribed by Unger. See, for example, Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 193, 199.

70 Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 191: 'Bommenee gecommiteerd om de biletten te doen drucken tot vercopen van de caracque, ende dat op Woensdage den 13 November [apparently subsequently postponed until 4 December], ende voorder oock de biletten tot vercoopen van de goederen, met de caracke [gecommen].' Also mentioned in Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 173: 'Ghesien de ghedruckte billetten rakende de vercoopinghe van de goederen, uyte crake ghecomen, is gheordonneert die te seynden aen den collegien van den admiraliteyten tot Amstelredam ende Hoorn, mitsgaders aen de commisen in Hollant, om die in de omliggende provintien ende steden in diligentie ghesonden ende uytghestelt te worden om eenen yeghelicken van den voorcr. vercoopinghe te adverteren.'



wrought in silver, a fine bezoar stone, and two ounces of amber'.<sup>71</sup> In November, Maurits's half-brother Frederick Hendrik, up and coming military and political figure and future stadtholder, was given 'from the goods coming from the carrack[,] a pavilion with its hangings, one ounce of ambergris, two *balekens* of musk, and a bezoar stone'.<sup>72</sup> In addition to the gifts for statesmen of the highest rank, the VOC merchants presented packets to the city of Middelburg, to at least sixteen local functionaries, and to the captains of the ships. These packets all contained porcelain—either little dishes or bowls.<sup>73</sup> The translation of goods into gifts may have been an effective ploy on the part of the VOC: One year after the ships returned to Zeeland and Carletti initiated the suit, on 12 August 1603, the Admiralty of Middelburg ('court of the sea') found in favour of the merchants, declaring 'the goods of the aforesaid defendant condemned and confiscated for the benefit of the common cause and of those who have the right after paying the costs'.<sup>74</sup> Mediation begat mediation: Goods purchased by Carletti were converted by way of capture into the currency of booty and, subsequently, translated into gifts and commodities.

The porcelain parcelled out in the fall of 1602 to the city of Middelburg (twenty-eight packets of little dishes; fourteen of small bowls); the bailiff, steward, tollmaster (two packets each); the burgomasters of Vlissingen (unspecified number of packets); the governor of Vlissingen (some of the largest pieces, with others from the warehouses); and others was an unprecedented gift—or bribe. Two months later, in December, it was resolved that 'the bed [*ledicant*] for the Duke of Florence [The Grand Duke of Tuscany] would be sent to '*den auditeur Artissen*' who would in turn send it to the King of France for him to see it, and thence to the Archduke: 'the porcupine [*porcos spino*] belonging to the Italian, and the rhinoceros horn cup [...] were also to be sent to the king'.<sup>75</sup> Some of the very curiosities Carletti transported for the Archduke of

71 Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 189: (7 October 1602) 'Voor Sijn Excellentie de naervolgende: het goud gevest met zijn toebehooren, een pauwellioen met de stoffage, een pauw, een schoon pedro besaer, 2 oncen ambers.' In April 1603 these items were valued—the pavilion and its hangings at £ 450 and the peacock, wrought in silver, together with the Seychelles nut, at £ 75. See Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 197.

72 Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 192. On bezoar stones and their value in early modern markets, see Borschberg P. "The Euro-Asian Trade in Bezoar Stones (approx. 1500 to 1700)", in North M., *Artistic and Cultural Exchanges between Europe and Asia, 1400–1900* (Surrey – Burlington, VT: 2010) 29–44.

73 Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 189–190.

74 Carletti, *My Voyage* 250; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 206.

75 Unger, *Oudste Reizen* 201. The *porcos spino* may refer to a bezoar stone, as these precious medicinal stones were found in porcupines among other animals.

Tuscany were being presented by the VOC to the King of France.<sup>76</sup> In the meantime, Carletti was being held accountable for the salary of the judges, who, he claimed, ‘tried—and always kept on trying—to do everything possible to prolong the trial’.<sup>77</sup> According to Carletti, the bed and other curiosities the VOC documented sending to the Archduke by way of diplomatic channels via the French court were sent to the Queen of France—in lieu, he writes, of providing ‘that which she justly asked in my favour and benefit’ when she wrote letters of support.<sup>78</sup> In other words, his request for her mediation was contravened, by the mediation of diplomatic gifts on the part of the VOC. Carletti reports in his *Chronicles*, addressed to the Archduke, that the Queen of France rejected the gift: ‘she did not want to accept it, not wanting to prejudice my cause’.<sup>79</sup> While the VOC may have thought it a clever move to present a bed intended for one Medici to another, the Queen of France was clearly on to the fact that the gift was given at Carletti’s expense. Later in the final *Chronicle*, Carletti describes what he experienced as a breakthrough after several years, when the Archduke apparently threatened to commandeer goods from Dutch ships in Leghorn (Livorno) equivalent to the value of what Carletti sought to recuperate in Zeeland. Even this, though, had little effect ultimately and he writes of finding himself ‘with an empty purse and one bag full of patience and another full of documents’ to show for his efforts.<sup>80</sup> Ultimately he was awarded 13,000 florins, some of which he was then forced to spend on a meal for the lawyers and judges. Carletti made his way home to his native Florence in 1606, and there composed his *Chronicles*.

In the last, pathetic passages of the final *Chronicle*, Carletti describes his feelings on having lost his worldly goods: ‘it is enough to break one’s heart,’ he writes, emphasizing too the estrangement he felt in a foreign country.<sup>81</sup> He goes on at some length, bemoaning the vicissitudes of fortune. Carletti and his goods were incidental casualties in a politically fraught trade encounter of the pirating kind. He, his life story, and his *Chronicles*, are unique—but the plotline involving Dutch capture of Portuguese (and Spanish, in the West

76 See Karl, “‘Galanterie di cose rare . . .’” 28.

77 Carletti, *My Voyage* 252; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 207.

78 Carletti, *My Voyage* 252; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 207.

79 Carletti, *My Voyage* 252; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 207. Translation is mine ([...] gli mandorno a donare quel letto et l’altre curiosità che portavo per V.A.S., sí come ho detto in altro luogo di questi mia discorsi, et che lei non volse accettare da quelli, quando glie ne offero, per non fare pregiudito alla mia causa.’).

80 Carletti, *My Voyage* 257; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 210.

81 Carletti, *My Voyage* 258; Carletti, *Ragionamenti* 211.

Indies) ships and goods is far from unheard of for this time. Indeed, it has been estimated that ‘during the period of the first charter (1602–1623) the VOC looted between 150 and 200 Portuguese ships, with a value of roughly ten million guilders. Without the income of this so-called “free commerce” the VOC would have gone bankrupt.’<sup>82</sup> In his landmark study of *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company* (1954) T. Volker pointed out that, prior to 1602, ‘only a few specimens of porcelain had reached Holland via Portugal and Spain’ and that it was in that year that for ‘the first time the Dutch public saw porcelain in appreciable quantities’.<sup>83</sup> The subsequent significant shipment of porcelain to the United Provinces arrived in Amsterdam two years later: This was booty from the Portuguese ship the *Santa Catarina*, seized by the Dutch naval hero Jacob van Heemskerck. In 1604, as a result of the seizure of that one Portuguese carrack, approximately 60,000 kilos or up to 100,000 pieces of porcelain are estimated to have entered the Dutch market. The arrival in both 1602 and 1604 of very large amounts of exotic goods—porcelain, raw and woven silks, pepper, musk and ambergris, gold, furniture—made national and international news at the time. From our perspective it is clear that these hyper-mediated goods and their arrival in European ports on Dutch ships signalled the dawn of a new era—one marked by the complex, global entanglements traced by ships, castles of the sea, vessels of mediation.

### Bibliography

- Borschberg P., *Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese, and Free Trade in the East Indies* (Singapore: 2011).
- Boxer C.R., *The Dutch Seaborne Empire 1600–1800* (London: 1965).
- Carletti Francesco, *My Voyage Around the World*, trans. H. Weinstock (New York, NY: 1964).

- 
- 82 Enthoven V., “Review of M.J. van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies 1595–1615*,” *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 122 (2007) 431–433. See also Enthoven V., *Zeeland en de opkomst van de Republiek: Handel en strijd in de Scheldedelta, 1550–1621*, Ph.D. dissertation (Leiden University: 2006). On Dutch piracy, see also Borschberg P., “From Self-Defense to an Instrument of War: Dutch Privateering around the Malay Peninsula in the Early Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 17 (2013) 35–52 and Clulow A., *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York, NY: 2014).
- 83 Volker T., *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company: A Record of the Dutch Registers between 1602 & 1682* (Leiden University: 1954) 22.



- Carletti Francesco, *Ragionamenti del mio viaggio intorno al mondo*, ed. A. Dei (Milan: 1987).
- Enthoven V., *Zeeland en de opkomst van de Republiek: Handel en strijd in de Scheldedelta, 1550–1621*, Ph.D. dissertation (Leiden University: 2006).
- Giltaij J. – Kelch J., *Praise of Ships and the Sea: The Dutch Marine Painters of the Seventeenth Century* (Rotterdam – Berlin: 1997).
- Ittersum M. van, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595–1615* (Leiden: 2006).
- Karl B., “‘Galanterie di cose rare...’ Filippo Sassetti’s Indian Shopping List for the Medici Grand Duke Francesco and his Brother Cardinal Ferdinando”, *Itinerario: International Journal on the History of European Expansion and Global Interaction* 32 (2008) 23–41.
- Mitrasing I.S., *The Age of Aceh and the Evolution of Kingship 1599–1641*, Ph.D. dissertation (Leiden University: 2011).
- Parthesius R., *Ships in Tropical Waters: The Development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Shipping Network in Asia, 1595–1600* (Amsterdam: 2010).
- Roelofson C.G., “Het trieste slot van een reis om de wereld in het begin van de zeventiende eeuw: De affaire Carletti”, *Mededelingen van de Nederlandse Vereniging voor Zeegeschiedenis* 20 (1970) 13–30.
- Sgrilli G., *Francesco Carletti: Mercante e viaggiatore fiorentino, 1573–1636* (Rocca San Casciano: 1905).
- Siebert B., “The Chocoma of the Pirate: On the Origins of the Dutch Seascape”, *Grey Room* 57 (2014) 6–23.
- Siebert B., *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real*, trans. G. Winthrop-Young (New York, NY: 2015).
- Unger W.S., *De Oudste Reizen van de Zeeuwen* (The Hague: 1948).