Life Behind The Logs: An Examination Of Life On Board VOC Ships, 1746-1756

By

Jeremy Spronk

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of History

At

Dalhousie University
Halifax Nova Scotia
August 2022

voor mijn ouders, die dit project hebben geïnspireerd en mij elke dag hebben gesteund

Table of Contents

Abstract

Using case-studies from Dutch East India Company (VOC) ship's logs from 1746-1756, this thesis examines living conditions, circumstances, and problems faced by the crews of the *Maarssen*, *Amsterdam,* and *Koopman*. Each chapter explores a case study of a single ship. The ships all kept daily logs that will be used to examine life aboard a VOC vessel. The analysis of each voyage will be broken down into five sub-categories: discipline, danger, daily life, wages, and the composition of the crew. The goal of this thesis is to determine whether the sailing conditions on VOC ships were relatively uniform in nature, and if these conditions had any impact on the success of the company as a whole. This thesis argues that the ships were noticeably different from each other in these five criteria.

Acknowledgements

I would be remiss if I did not thank certain people for their role in helping me complete this project. First and foremost, I'd like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Jerry Bannister. His knowledge and ability to help me shape the scope and direction of this project were vital in its completion, and his understanding and willingness to allow me to shape my own research path is something for which I will be forever grateful. I would also like to extend great thanks to the second and third readers of this thesis, Dr. Roger Marsters and Dr. Colin Mitchell for their insights and advice.

I would like to thank my parents, who inspired and encouraged my love of history and reading from a young age, along with fostering my ability to speak and read Dutch, a key facet of this project. Our discussions surrounding source material, historiography and language have been vital in the completion of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to my immensely supportive group of friends who have stood by me through every step of this process. They listened to me go on and on about the lives of sailors in a world very different to their own and helped put a vacation together to take me away from my desk when it was greatly needed. So, to the boys, I love you guys and next time I'm around the first round is on me.

Chapter 1
Introduction

This thesis examines the physical and social environments that formed the basis for living conditions on board Dutch East India Company ships in the mid-eighteenth century. It will take a micro-historical, case-study based approach to explore the experiences of sailors under contract with the Dutch East India Company, and examine the day to day lives of the men on board. This thesis suggests that while the environments created on Dutch East India Company vessels were not unique by any measurable maritime standard and operated similarly to other merchant enterprises of the era, the study of these logbooks serves as a glimpse into the social history of these sailors and an illuminating look at the voyages they undertook. It is impossible to separate the sailors from the cargo they carried, thus the examinations of the voyages undertaken will be coupled with detailed sections regarding the Dutch East India Company trade for tea and nutmeg.

The living conditions onboard ships of the Dutch East India Company will be examined through five main elements. Incidents noted on board will be categorized into key issues that maritime professionals faced. These main categories will include: discipline, danger, the wages men earned, the composition of the crew and the day-to-day life at sea. This approach will be used in an attempt to create a broad description of sailing conditions as a whole in the Dutch East India Company in the 1750s. This time period has been chosen based on the availability of source material. The examination of writings from the captains as opposed to from sailors before the has both advantages

and shortcomings. The captains were typically of a higher literary standard than ordinary sailors, thus allowing for a more detailed and eloquent explanation of events on board. While this is an unescapable reality of the period under examination, it presents a challenge in attempting to examine and discuss the lives of those whose voices were not recorded. It is important to note that the experiences of ordinary crew members are drawn from the writings of officers who had significant, if not absolute, power over their daily lives.

VOC Background

For the sake of clarity, from this point the Dutch East India Company will be referred to by its Dutch abbreviation of VOC (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie.)*. The VOC was founded in 1602 as an amalgamation of *voorcompagnieën*.[1] The Dutch government found sufficient reason to organize these existing companies into a sort of cartel as a way to mitigate risks and pool resources to compete with the British and the union of the Spanish and Portuguese. [2] The Estates General gave a twenty-one-year monopoly on Asian trade to the new company, in an effort to establish itself as a major player in the region. The amalgamation of pre-existing companies and ensuing monopoly on Asian trade allowed the VOC to raise significant capital very quickly. The

---

[1] *Voorcompagnieën* trans. Pre-Companies.
O.C Gelderblom, Jong, De, A., and Jonker, J.P.B. "The Formative Years of the Modern Corporation: The Dutch East India Company VOC, 1602-1623." *Journal of Economic History* 73, no. 4 (2013): 1050-1076.

[2] John Bruce, *Annals of the Hon. East-India Company, from Their Establishment by the Charter of Queen Elizabeth, 1600, to the Union of the London and English East-India Companies, 1707-8*. Vol. 1. London: Printed, by Authority of the Hon. Court of Directors, by Cox, Son, and Baylis, and Published by Black, Parry and Kingsbury, 1810. 28

Company raised 6,440,200 guilders selling stocks to investors, making it the world's first publicly traded company.[3] The company became immensely profitable over the next century, benefiting from a geo-political situation that included a war-weary Spanish empire, incapable of financially supporting its wars in the low countries, Asian trade and the maintenance of its South American colonies.[4] The ensuing truce between Spain and the Netherlands was exploited by the VOC to massively build up its influence in Asian markets. The VOC also established a significant military presence in south-east Asia, conquering and fortifying Batavia.[5]

This was the first permanent Dutch outpost in Asia, allowing the VOC to establish a permanent foothold in the region. The establishment of military outposts in the region were essential to the smooth operation of the VOC's commerce, and other fortified cities/trading posts were soon set up around Asia and southern Africa. The expiration of the truce with Spain in 1621 presented an opportunity to wage a military campaign to drive the Spanish and Portuguese out of Asia.[6] The VOC spent the next half century jockeying for control of the south-east Asian spice market with the English.

---

[3] Bruce, *Annals.* 28
Equivalent to approximately €115,000,000.00 in today's purchasing power.
"Value of the Guilder versus Euro." International Institute of Social History. Accessed December
07, 2021. https://iisg.amsterdam/en/research/projects/hpw/calculate.php

[4] Bruce, *Annals.* 29

[5] Present day Jakarta, Indonesia. The fortified city was conquered and renamed Batavia in 1619. The name remained until the Japanese took the city during the second world war.
Bruce, *Annals.* 30

[6] Bruce, *Annals.* 32

Another colony was established at the Cape of Good Hope in 1651, further consolidating Dutch control of the sea trade route to Asia.[7] The VOC established a host of other trading posts and expanded their reach exponentially throughout the seventeenth century. While the power of the organization began to decline in terms of power towards the end of the eighteenth century, up until the 1740s, the company remained the predominant global mercantile operation.

The *Maarssen*, *Amsterdam* and *Koopman* in VOC Historiography

The experiences of the men aboard the *Maarssen*, *Amsterdam* and *Koopman* fall within much of the accepted historiography surrounding the company. VOC voyages were of a significantly longer duration than many Anglo-American maritime scholars would be used to, and this occurs for a number of reasons. The stops in port made by these VOC vessels were less frequent than found other voyages during this period, often stopping just once in a voyage to Batavia from Amsterdam. This is confirmed by a study done by Peter Solar and Pim de Zwart, who indicate that "For the 31 VOC voyages between 1753 and 1791 for which the logbooks seem to be complete, the ships made only one stop in 24 cases, two stops in six cases and three stops in one case."[8] The voyages studied by Solar and de Zwart concur with the findings from the examinations of the *Maarssen*, *Amsterdam* and *Koopman* as these ships stopped only in Cape Town on route to the Indian Ocean.

---

[7] Bruce, *Annals.* 37

[8] Solar, Peter M., and Pim de Zwart. "Why Were Dutch East Indiamen so Slow?" *International Journal of Maritime History* 29, no. 4 (November 2017): 745

Another explanation for the relative length of VOC voyages is offered by Jaap Bruin and Femme Gaastra, who state that "Dutch skippers and mates had less experience on the China route than their Danish and Swedish counterparts and suggested that this might have played a role in the relative slowness with which the ships of the VOC returned from China."[9] While this is not a blanket explanation, it may offer some explanation as to why VOC voyages to Asia took longer than their other European counterparts.

In addition to the lack of stops during the voyage, the routes taken by the ships examined in this thesis are described by the examined journals to be quite similar to each other, only branching off once arriving at the Indian Ocean.[10] This was standard for VOC mariners, as "Whatever their equipment, VOC captains were required to follow detailed sailing instructions."[11] This continuity is interesting to examine, as the standardization of routes would have been beneficial to the company for a multitude of reasons. The adherence to specific routes would allow for detailed and accurate scheduling, thus helping inexperienced navigators find their way.

The composition of the crews of the *Maarssen*, *Amsterdam* and *Koopman* also appears to be in line with studies done by P.C. van Royen and Matthias van Rossum. The significant presence of foreigners on board all three examined ships, while in direct

---

[9] J. R. Bruijn, F. S. Gaastra and I. Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Den Haag, 1987–1989), 103–6

[10] For detailed examples of this, a map of each voyage has been included at the start of each chapter focused on a particular voyage.

[11] Solar, Peter M., and Pim de Zwart. "Why Were Dutch East Indiamen so Slow?" *International Journal of Maritime History* 29, no. 4 (November 2017): 745

conflict with instructions from the *Heeren XVII*, seems to be in line with findings of modern scholars. In all three journals, direct mentions are made to foreign sailors, classifying them as *Europeese* (European), *inlandse* (native), *islanders* (islanders) *moorse* (Muslim) or *jentiefse* (Hindu) in order to identify sailors by their region, religion or ethnicity. P.C. van Royen indicates that this prevalence existed only after 1720, and "indeed till about 1720 the main share of the sailors working for the VOC still originated from the Dutch Republic."[12]

The *Maarssen*, *Amsterdam* and *Koopman* in Broader Maritime Historiography

The findings in the logbooks of the *Maarssen, Amsterdam and Koopman* require a comparison to issues prevalent in a maritime historiography broader than just the VOC. To help situate the logbooks within the conversations surrounding maritime history, I have separated certain factors that defined shipboard life and compared them with contemporary findings regarding the subject

Certain scholars have neglected the role that religion played on board ocean-bound vessels in this period, while others use it as a focal point of their research. While this thesis does neither, and attempts to observe and analyse without creating a false narrative, the role of religion in maritime historiography cannot be ignored. N.A.M Rodger in particular ignores religion in *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* because "the evidence I have used says very little about them." [13] Marcus Rediker

[12] Royen, P.C. van. "Manning the Merchant Marine: The Dutch Maritime Labour Market about 1700." *International Journal of Maritime History* 1, no. 1 (June 1989): 26
[13] N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (Norton, 1996) 11-12

makes note of an attraction to "superstition" rather than "attachment to formal religion."[14] On the other side of this debate, Christopher P. Magra argues that "Sailors' religious values represent an ideological link between sea and shore that has been neglected by maritime historians."[15] The prevalence of religion on board the *Maarssen, Amsterdam and Koopman,* and its role in various incidents discussed throughout this chapter indicate the importance of organized religion overlooked by Rodger and Rediker. Despite the frequency with which religion comes up in the logbooks, there is no one religion that dominates incidents described in the journals of the *Maarssen, Amsterdam and Koopman*. At this time the Netherlands is a mess religiously, and this manifests itself on board the examined ships. Catholics, Calvinists, Huguenots and followers of Asian and African religions all worked and lived together aboard these VOC vessels.[16] It would be overly optimistic to call these vessels a bastion of religious freedom, as tensions between religious groups occurred throughout the examined voyages, but there was a distinct lack of animosity on board. This is not to say that other ships would not also include some degree of religious freedom, but rather that it was left to the discretion of the captain on most merchant ships. Alston Kennerley

[14] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World,1700–1750* (Cambridge University Press,1989) 179

[15] Christopher P. Magra "Faith at Sea: Exploring Maritime Religiosity in the Eighteenth Century." *International Journal of Maritime History* 19, no. 1 (June 2007):88

[16] Direct mention to all of these religions are made in the examined logbooks

notes that "religious practice, if any, except in port, was in the hands of ships' masters."[17]

Violent discipline on board the *Maarssen, Amsterdam and Koopman* is in line with broader findings on shipboard discipline from the eighteenth century. As in many other maritime outfits, flogging was the main punishment doled out on board VOC ships. Similarly, flogging was incredibly common as a form of discipline on board British ships in the same era, with Andrew Johnston noting that "flogging with the feared cat 'o nine tails remains the most infamous […} because unlike the death penalty, it was well within a commanding officer's rights to issue some manner of corporal punishment without trial."[18] These forms of punishment were also prevalent on German and American ships.[19]

As with many other maritime outfits, wages were the primary reason that men went to sea. This is more true of Dutch outfits than other European mercantile enterprises, as impressment was illegal in the Netherlands. [20] Typically in merchant shipping, and as described in the logbooks of the *Maarssen, Amsterdam and Koopman*

---

[17] Kennerley, Alston. "Welfare in British Merchant Seafaring." *International Journal of Maritime History* 28, no. 2 (May 2016): 366

[18] Johnston, Andrew. "'Arbitrary and Cruel Punishments': Trends in Royal Navy Courts Martial, 1860–1869." *International Journal of Maritime History* 33, no. 3 (August 2021): 537

[19] Witt, Jann M. "'During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship': The Merchant Captain from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century." *International Journal of Maritime History* 13, no. 2 (December 2001): 172
Gerstenberger, Heide. "The Disciplining of German Seamen." *International Journal of Maritime History* 13, no. 2 (December 2001): 44.

[20]

wages were due at "each delivering port, paid upon arrival."[21] While wages varied nation by nation, the delivery method was similar and a sailor could forfeit his wages for a number of reasons. These included "habitual drunkenness, insolent language, mutinous acts or for leaving the vessel in case of distress."[22] A deeper examination into VOC wage practices will follow, notably the work of Claudia Rei and Femme Gaastra will be used to corroborate the wage findings from the journals, but the VOC wage practices did not differ greatly from other mercantile enterprises.

Biography of the Logbooks

Each chapter of my thesis will be based on a case study of a single ship. The ships all kept daily logs, and it is these documents that will be used to examine life aboard a VOC vessel. Each chapter will be based around an examination of the ship's journal, with supporting secondary research to corroborate trends and incidents that I found throughout the journals. The journals are resources rich in detail regarding individual incidents and daily life, but require a decent amount of secondary research to properly place in context. It is this balance that I am attempting to strike in this thesis. The examination of each voyage will be broken down into five sub-categories: Discipline, Danger, Daily Life, Wages & the Composition of the Crew. Violent discipline was standard practice on these ships during the eighteenth century, and will for the

[21] Oliveira Torres, Rodrigo de. "Handling the Ship: Rights and Duties of Masters, Mates, Seamen and Owners of Ships in Nineteenth-Century Merchant Marine." *International Journal of Maritime History* 26, no. 3 (August 2014): 596

[22] Oliveira Torres, Rodrigo de. "Handling the Ship: Rights and Duties of Masters, Mates, Seamen and Owners of Ships in Nineteenth-Century Merchant Marine." *International Journal of Maritime History* 26, no. 3 (August 2014): 596

purposes of this examination be noted as any punishment that resulted in physical harm to the offending sailor.

Violent punishment of sailors was not a uniquely Dutch or VOC phenomenon either, as navies and merchant outfits employed corporal punishment on a regular basis to keep crews in line.[23] Ever present danger was also a major factor in the lives of men afloat. Inter-continental voyages could take many months and even years, so there was significant opportunity for accidents that caused great bodily harm or even death.[24] There were numerous deaths recorded in the examined journals attributed to falling overboard or off masts while rigging. Storms also posed significant risk to an inexperienced crew, as did disease.

Life aboard these ships could be monotonous for many weeks at a time, and the journals make note of what men did to pass the time. Standard procedure on the majority of VOC voyages from Europe to Asia was that ships made one stop to re-provision.[25] In the period examined, this meant a stop in Cape Town, roughly halfway between Amsterdam and Batavia. This meant long unbroken stretches at sea, and given the shifts the men worked in did not occupy the entire day, it is important to note the

---

[23] Sarah Kinkel, "Disorder, Discipline, and Naval Reform in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain." *The English Historical Review* 128, no. 535 (2013): 1454

[24] Robert Parthesius, *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters: The Development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Shipping Network in Asia 1595-1660*, Amsterdam University Press, 2010. 99

[25] Robert Parthesius, *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters: The Development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Shipping Network in Asia 1595-1660*, Amsterdam University Press, 2010. 99

things that sailors used to keep themselves occupied, be it drinking, gambling or singing and playing music.

Sailing on a merchant vessel was not done as volunteer work, and it is impossible to discuss living conditions on board VOC ships without a discussion of the wages that men earned. We are able to glean the wages earned from death notices in the margins of certain daily entries, and corroborate them with studies done by Claudia Rei and Femme Gaastra. A table of wages is included in the appendix and will be referred to throughout this thesis. The composition of the crew will also be examined. This dive into social history serves an important purpose, as the men who make up the examined crews came from various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. The differences found on the individual ships will be examined and discussed in each chapter These journals were kept for a variety of reasons, serving as a way to recount the voyage after the ship had returned to port, but also as financial and disciplinary records that the company could use to determine payments and penalties. It was common practice for maritime outfits to pay the wages of a deceased sailor to their family, thus requiring a record of the date of death and the payment that was to be given. These instances are noted in identical fashion in three different ship's journals written by separate captains, leading to the belief that there may have been some sort of standardization in this practice.

These journals were kept by the VOC following the conclusion of a voyage, and were probably nationalized by the Dutch government with the rest of the Company's

holdings in 1800.[26] In any case, the documents are now in the holdings of the National Archive of the Netherlands. These journals have been scanned and are now available for dissemination on the archive's website. [27]

Certain voyages will be chosen for this case study for a multitude of reasons. The eighteenth-century writings are much more accessible than those from the seventeenth-century, allowing for a much more detailed analysis and dissemination. The handwriting and the structure is clearer and better-organized, and there is a more complete selection available within the archive itself. The voyages employed three different captains, which presented a larger challenge to find than I had originally expected. The use of three different captains was essential to a proper investigation of the commonality of VOC sailing conditions, as examining voyages skippered by the same individual would skew the findings of this investigation.

The voyages also occurred during a similar time period, thus reducing the possibility of variance as a result of generations or conflict. While it would be useful to

---

[26] The company's charter expired and was not renewed on December 31, 1800. The territorial and physical possessions of the company were nationalized following the resulting dissolution. It seems safe to assume that the archives of the company were part of this nationalization.
Claudia Rei, "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014): p. 30

[27] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10*
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 15
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entries from October 1754 -November 1756
https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/1.10.87

examine the evolution of living conditions on board VOC ships throughout the existence of the company, that goes beyond the timeline and the scope of this thesis. All of these voyages occurred before the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, which allows for a consistent maritime environment. It would have been also intriguing to conduct a comparison of conditions on the VOC ships during periods of peace and of conflict, but I had neither the time nor the resources to do so. In any case, only voyages in times of relative peace were included for the sake of consistency. These documents were written by hand in middle Dutch, which created an intriguing and formidable challenge to overcome. While I am a fluent Dutch speaker, the age of these documents presented an enthralling obstacle that required some work to overcome. These journals also present a fun exercise in paleography. While the handwriting is neat and orderly, particularly by the standard of the eighteenth century, there occurred a small number of instances where certain words were illegible.

As mentioned above, the goal of this thesis is to determine whether the sailing conditions on VOC ships were uniform in nature, and if these conditions had any impact on the success of the company as a whole. To accomplish these goals, we must first determine how to measure or evaluate the conditions themselves. There were a great deal of daily experiences and issues that seafarers faced that made up their maritime experience. Attempting to quantify the experience of a specific sailor on a specific day would be an exercise in futility without diaries from each man. The best way to abate this issue is to focus on a certain number of occurrences or issues that have become the defining examples of the seafaring experience in the early modern world. These

categories will be: discipline, danger & desertion, the wages men earned, the size of the crew and the monotony of life at sea. Through the detailed examination of these journals, and with support from secondary literature concerning both the VOC and the broader early modern maritime world we will attempt to paint a picture of the work environment that these ships became.

Logbooks in Maritime Historiography

While there was a standardization amongst these ship's logs withing the VOC, they were by no means a uniquely Dutch phenomenon. The British East India Company employed logs kept in a similar fashion, designed to "record crew behavior for statutory purposes – infractions of discipline such as fights, drunkenness, desertion, as well as deaths appeared in the log. They were the means for masters to self-report their compliance with regulations as required by law." These records used by the British in the same manner as the VOC. Similar logbooks were also used by Spanish ships as early as the sixteenth century.[28]

Given the widespread usage of these logbooks amongst maritime outfits, and their subsequent use as research material by generations of maritime history scholars, their employment in the discussion surrounding maritime history is not a new phenomenon. VOC logbooks from ships sailing to South-East Asia form the Basis of

[28] Wilkinson, C., Woodruff, S.D., Brohan, P., Claesson, S., Freeman, E., Koek, F., Lubker, S.J., Marzin, C. and Wheeler, D. (2011), Recovery of logbooks and international marine data: the RECLAIM project. Int. J. Climatol., 31: 969
Sluyter, Andrew. "THE HISPANIC ATLANTIC'S TASAJO TRAIL." *Latin American Research Review* 45, no. 1 (2010): 113

Robert Parthesius' work *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters: The Development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Shipping Network in Asia 1595-1660*. I attempt to use the three journals in a similar fashion in this thesis, to chart events and living conditions on these Vessels.

A brief history of these logs seems to be in order. These logbooks evolved from the book used to record readings from the chip log, employed to estimate a vessel's speed while on a voyage.[29] The evolution of the logs is important for this study, as chip logs, while useful for charting speed and time during a voyage offer very little in terms of useable detail when discussing the sailors themselves. Considerable detail can be gleaned from these evolved logs, including weather, disciplinary proceedings, activities while not working and other goings on.

The structure of these logs is also relatively consistent throughout various maritime enterprises. Katherine Griffin notes that "In one common arrangement the technical information for example, winds, courses, temperature, latitude, longitude appears to the left of the entry and the remarks to the right."[30] It is this arrangement that appears in the VOC logs examined for the purposes of this thesis. Similar structure was also found in Spanish logbooks from the same era.[31] This degree of similarity

[29] Harlaftis, Gelina. "Maritime History: A New Version of the Old Version and the True History of the Sea." *International Journal of Maritime History* 32, no. 2 (May 2020): 392
[30] Griffin, Katherine H. "Ships' Logs in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society." *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 105 (1993): 101
[31] Sluyter, Andrew. "THE HISPANIC ATLANTIC'S TASAJO TRAIL." *Latin American Research Review* 45, no. 1 (2010): 112

amongst ship's logs is interesting to note, given the fact that their recording was mandated by the maritime body the vessel belonged to.

The use of captain's logs to chart disciplinary incidents has been a common occurrence in maritime scholarship for a long time. This is also not limited to studies of one nation or maritime outfit. Patrick Underwood, Steven Pfaff and Michael Hechter note in *Threat, Deterrence, and Penal Severity: An Analysis of Flogging in the Royal Navy, 1740–1820* that the Captain's logs "record the proceedings of the voyage and daily events, including reported disciplinary violations, the name of the offender, and punishments and punishments given." [32] Markus Eder goes even further in his description of the utility of these logs, stating that when examining disciplinary incidents, "the best source is the logbooks of individuals ships. The great value of this source material lies in the fact that it provides a more representative description of day-to-day offences, whereas courts-martial mainly focus on serious infractions."[33] The use of these logs to describe the weather faced by sailors and the danger that came with it has also been well documented by maritime historians. No matter how terse the writer tried to be, the constantly shifting winds and storms required constant notation. This was true not only within the VOC, but in the Anglo-American maritime world as well. Katherine Griffin notes that "even habitually brief logs contain lengthy

[32] Underwood, Patrick, Steven Pfaff, and Michael Hechter. "Threat, Deterrence, and Penal Severity: An Analysis of Flogging in the Royal Navy, 1740–1820." *Social Science History* 42, no. 3 (2018) 425

[33] Eder, Markus Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy of the Seven Years' War, 1755–1763. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate 2004. 64

descriptions of storms at sea, usually because of the number of sail and wind changes to record."[34] These logs are also of particular importance to climate historians, particularly with the emergence of the CLIWOC project. (Climatological Database For The World's Oceans) The CLIWOC database includes daily positional and other data from more than three thousand Spanish, English, French, and Dutch logbooks that record some five thousand voyages between 1750 and 1854.[35]

[34] Griffin, Katherine H. "Ships' Logs in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society." *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 105 (1993): 100
[35] Sluyter, Andrew. "THE HISPANIC ATLANTIC'S TASAJO TRAIL." *Latin American Research Review* 45, no. 1 (2010): 112
CLIWOC – Introduction https://webs.ucm.es/info/cliwoc/intro.htm

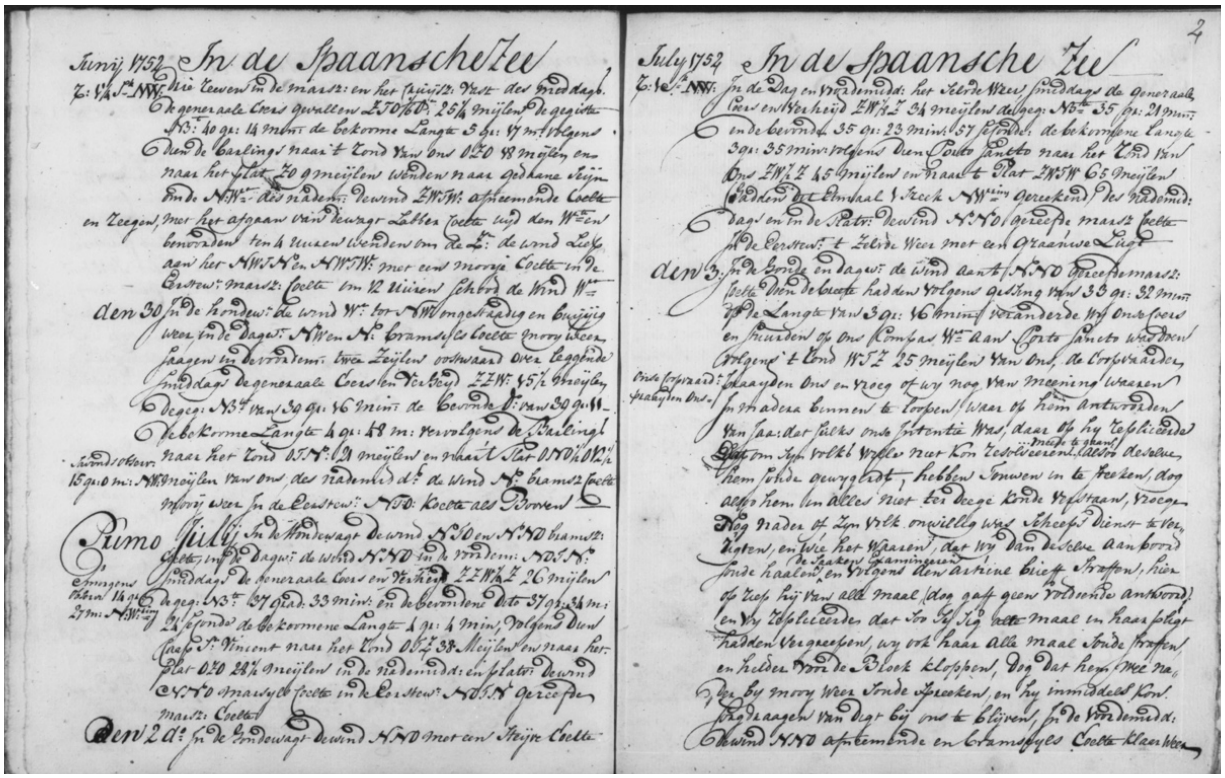


Figure 1.1 Scan from the journal of the Maarssen

Secondary Literature Review

Shifts in historiography are a natural evolution of historical study and the scholarship regarding the Dutch East India Company is not immune to this. As with any study of a colonial power, a growing consciousness of the plight of oppressed people will breed new scholarship and ideas. In this review, works from this new wave of scholarship will be examined. All have a differing focus but are centred around the decline of the company in the second half of the eighteenth century. The traditional view is that the rise of the British in the region was the primary factor for the company's decline, but newer work has pushed other reasons to the forefront. VOC

scholarship is an interesting field that has undergone a revolution in historiographical understanding since people began writing histories of the company. Traditionally, the VOC was portrayed as a "multinational corporation and non-state colonial actor," with its policies developed as a result of market strategies and good financial government.[36] In concert with shifts in global thinking regarding colonialism and the impacts of state however, this traditional view has been superseded by a new interpretation. Newer scholarship since the early 2000s is quick to classify VOC activity after the early seventeenth century as the "establishment of a clear-cut Dutch empire overseas."[37] Some authors have taken this to an extreme, including the VOC in a row with "extensive territorial entities [including] Ancient Rome, the Qing Empire, and the USSR"[38]

While it is imperative to remember that the VOC was technically a non-state entity, it is true that it was the official representative of the Dutch state in the Asian colonial context. This shift in historiography is important to note for the purpose of this literature review, as our examination of works about the decline of the VOC will focus on this new wave of scholarship. Arthur Weststeijn offers perhaps the most nuanced approach to this shift, arguing that "seen from the western shores of the North Sea, the

---

[36] Arthur Weststeijn, "The VOC as a Company-State: Debating Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion." *Itinerario* 38, no. 1 (2014): 13

[37] Weststeijn, "The VOC as a Company-State: Debating Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion," 13

[38] Jane Burbank, and Cooper, Frederick. *Empires in World History Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. 161.

VOC system entailed a clear-cut exercise in worldwide empire, badly disguised as a peaceful commercial enterprise."[39]

While there is a depth to modern VOC scholarship it is the focus on the institutional history that has dominated scholarship to this point. Scholars such as Femme Gaastra, Jaap Bruijn and Leonard Blussé have laid a solid foundation in this institutional research. The *Annales*-esque methodology employed by these scholars have long formed the basis of VOC research, but there has been a shift in both thinking and methodology in the last decade or so. The approaches of these scholars mirror the *longue durée* approach popularised by Fernand Braudel. These institutional works covered significant lengths of the company's lifespan, with a focus on shifts over time within the VOC as a company. While this approach is a fantastic starting point for VOC scholarship, it lacked the focus to thoroughly examine certain elements within the history of the company.

A good portion of this shift has come as a direct result of the TANAP project (Towards a New Age of Partnership.) The TANAP project is an organization that strives to produce a new wave of VOC research, by working in South Asia and training new generation of historians in Asia, Africa and Europe who "will form an international academic network; to foster international cooperation aimed at the exchange of knowledge required for improved management of the common heritage."[40] This

[39] Weststeijn, "The VOC as a Company-State: Debating Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion," 27

[40] "New Partnerships, New Histories," TANAP, accessed July 17, 2022, http://www.tanap.net/content/about/new_histories.cfm)

project is a joint initiative of Leiden University and the National Archives at The Hague which supports VOC scholarship across the world. Three works that were created with support from the TANAP project serve a particular importance to this thesis.

A discussion of VOC historiography would not be complete without a discussion of Femme Gaastra's *De Geschiedenis van de VOC*. (The History of the VOC) In a discussion focused on the rise of the VOC as a colonial power, Gaastra poses and answers a number of questions throughout the work. Did the costs of territorial possession outweigh the benefits? Wouldn't it have been better for the company to confine itself to trade rather than engage in lavish military operations that eventually bankrupted the company? Gaastra would answer these questions with a cautious yes. However, his analysis avoids the impact of the fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784), which is the commonly agreed upon final twist of the knife for the VOC.

"In the Shadow of the Company: The Dutch East India Company and Its Servants in the Period of Its Decline (1740-1796)" by Chris Nierstrasz is an attempt to describe the evolving relationship between the VOC and its workers in the late eighteenth century. Nierstrasz uses what he calls "three levels" to discuss these relationships: power and trade, monopoly and private trade, and profits and fortunes. These levels form the structure of his work, as Nierstrasz divides the book in three parts. Through these contexts he is able to provide a detailed and nuanced examination of the working conditions of those under VOC employ.

"Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company" by Kerry Ward is an illuminating look at forced migration and labour practices within the

company, Ward employs a staggering amount of archival research to arrive at the conclusions offered in the work. Split into seven chapters, the book focuses on the penal transportation used by the VOC to stock their factories and docks. This became necessary because the Dutch, unlike Britain or Spain, rarely took part in systemic forced migrations of groups of people from their home country. The Dutch never had domestic rebellions to quell or areas of their country to depopulate.

A shift in both methodology and topic from the previously discussed works, Yong Liu's "The Dutch East India Company's Tea Trade with China, 1757-1781" focuses on a location rather than an institution. The focus on the VOC's tea trade with China allows for a far deeper examination into one aspect of the company's trade than the other books examined for this thesis allow. What Liu lacks in breadth he more than makes up for in his depth of research. Written as part of the TANAP project, this work serves to add a new dimension to the previously underdeveloped research area of the VOC in China.

Robert Parthesius' *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters: The Development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Shipping Network in Asia 1595-1660* is an incredibly useful guide to the formation of the VOC and its emergence as a significant player in the Asian spice trade. Before the publication of this book, the majority of the scholarship surrounding the formation and emergence of the company had focused on political and economic factors that paved the way for said emergence. Parthesius' book provides a significant departure from this train of thought, with an almost exclusive focus on maritime factors within the history of the VOC. His book is based on a

compiled database of VOC voyages from the seventeenth century and presents a chronological account of growth and logistical aspects within the VOC shipping network.

Jaap Bruijn's *Schepen Van De VOC En Een Vergelijking Met De Vaart Op Azië Door Andere Compagnieën* (Ships Of The VOC And A Comparison Asian Trade Of Other Companies) is a detailed analysis of the VOC in the eighteenth century and basis much of its conclusions on comparison with the British East India Company. Directly focusing on the vessels themselves as a manifestation of company influence and power in the region, Bruijn offers a timeline to the conflict between the two companies and the problems that arose with each approach to shipbuilding. Bruijn indicates that the VOC, unlike the EIC, would often buy or rent third party ships to keep costs down.[41] In creating a competitive shipbuilding market the VOC was able to stimulate the shipbuilding market in the Netherlands and slash costs at the same time. The EIC was not found to have outsourced their shipbuilding in the same fashion. This is also true of the Spanish, Portuguese and Swedish merchant outfits.[42] Bruijn argues that this advantage was a factor that helped propel the VOC towards dominance of the Asian trade market, as lower costs per voyage helped the company undercut the merchant fleets of other nations upon return to European markets.

[41] Jaap R. Bruijn. "Schepen Van De VOC En Een Vergelijking Met De Vaart Op Azië Door Andere compagnieën". *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 99 (1984): 2
[42] Jaap R. Bruijn. "Schepen Van De VOC En Een Vergelijking Met De Vaart Op Azië Door Andere compagnieën". *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 99 (1984) 8

Bruijn's *Between Batavia and the Cape: Shipping Patterns of the Dutch East India Company* is another helpful look at routes taken and challenges faced by VOC ships during voyages to and from Asia. Most important to his research are the figures of shipwrecks, which he calculates to be six per-cent.[43] Bruijn's research surrounding the routes taken by VOC ships is also useful, and provides us with the requisite information to draw the maps given to the reader to visually plot each voyage.

Jan Lucassen's *A Multinational and Its Labor Force: The Dutch East India Company, 1595-1795* is an illuminating look at the labour market within the VOC network. Using ships logs an employment records, Lucassen provides detailed documentation of the nearly one million people that sailed to Asia on VOC ships during its existence, at an average of five thousand per year. With detailed figures regarding migration and death rates within the VOC network, Lucassen is able to paint a picture of the evolution of both the sailing and land-bound workforces the company employed. Particularly useful in its explanation of death rates, Lucassen's figure of an 85% survival rate for sailors during VOC voyages helps serve as a baseline for our examination of deaths onboard the three ships examined in this thesis.

Nadra Ashfaque's *The Dutch East India Company And The Mughal Court* provides a useful source when documenting VOC trade relationships in India. This is particularly useful in Chapter 4, given the landing of the *Koopman* in Surat. The VOC's

[43] Jaap R. Bruijn, "Between Batavia and the Cape: Shipping Patterns of the Dutch East India Company." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 251–65. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20070358. 261

trade practices in India were until relatively recently an underdeveloped field of study. Due to the lack of volume relative to studies focusing on VOC activities in Indonesia, China and Japan, Indian trade had taken a backseat. This has changed in the last fifteen years, partly because of the TANAP project and the work of scholars like Nadra Ashfaque and Ghulam A. Nadri.

Sailors, Zielverkopers, and the Dutch East India Company: The Maritime Labour Market In Eighteenth-Century Surat by Ghulam A. Nadri is the most complete work to date regarding the VOC in Surat. Nadri focuses on the role of the *Moorse zeevarenden* (Muslim sailors) and the vital role that they played in allowing the VOC to expand their operations throughout south-east Asia. This will be elaborated on later in this thesis, but the relationship between hiring practices in Asia and company directives from Amsterdam was a problematic one. Nadri examines the structure and organization of the labour market in Surat, and the impact that VOC arrival had on the port and local politics.

Given the aforementioned "new wave" of VOC scholarship, it is important to ask ourselves "where is topic?" Given recent developments in the field, and the emergence of the TANAP project, it is safe to assume that the field will continue its shift into a far more social direction, moving away from the institutional histories of old. While scholars such as Femme Gaastra and Leonard Blussé have meant a great deal for the development of the field, their institutional histories will soon be usurped from their status in the canon. The shift towards more local histories and the emergence of historians from the regions colonized by the VOC has led to a more place-based

approach in recent scholarship, as evidenced by the works reviewed above. It remains true that Leiden University remains a hub of VOC research and Brill remains the dominant publisher in the field, but the importation of scholars and material from South Asia presents a new dimension to the scholarship.

The second major theme discussed in the reviewed works was the relationship between the VOC and its workers. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, it seems as though the VOC was unable to control its labour force. The emergence of private trade cut into company profits, and the consequences of forced migration began to rear their heads in both Batavia and the Cape colony. This theme is far more prevalent in recent scholarship and fits with the shifting attitudes towards social history in VOC scholarship. This is clear evidence of the benefits of this new wave of scholarship, as shifting ideas of lives and impacts the individual provide new angles from which to explain this historical phenomenon.

VOC scholarship maintains its status as a distinct subfield at the crux of a number of historical disciplines. It draws historians from numerous historical backgrounds including economic, maritime, national, naval, and social historians. This variety is incredibly important to the scholarship, as the company had too many facets to limit its study to one branch of historical thought. The push towards the study of the individual has been vital in this breadth, as approaches become more and more varied. The works examined for the purposes of this review are written by a group of historians with diverse ethnic and scholarly backgrounds and help demonstrate a growing shift in

methodology and source material. These shifts are vital to further developing the field and allow for ever-growing access to the world of VOC scholarship.

These local legacies are important in the study of colonialism, and particularly in the study of the VOC. The impacts that the VOC left on the peoples of the regions it colonized are lasting, with direct colonial impacts lasting well into the twentieth century. Indonesian independence was only recognized by the Dutch government in 1949, and this colonization had tangible impacts on VOC scholarship. It is too easy for Dutch scholars to ignore local scholarship and stories, in a similar vein to the relationship between settler scholarship with indigenous peoples in Canada.

The aforementioned categories will form the basis of each chapter. Each chapter will focus on one journal, with sections devoted to each category. This approach will be taken to maximise the detail that can be extracted from each journal. This will also serve to create a consistent analysis, so all the voyages can be examined in the same manner. A brief conclusion will be offered at the end of each chapter, but the conclusion at the end of the thesis will serve to tie all the voyages together and explain how each these wooden worlds tied into the VOC sailing experience.

Chapter Two:
The *Maarssen* (Amsterdam-Batavia, June 1746- May 1747)

The ships examined in this thesis all kept daily logs, and they will be used to examine life aboard a VOC vessel. They were kept for multiple reasons, helping detail the voyage following a successful return to port, but also serving as financial and disciplinary records that the company could use to determine payments and penalties. It was common practice for the VOC to pay the wages a deceased sailor had earned to that point to his family, thus requiring notation of the date of death indicating the size of payment required. These instances are noted in identical fashion in all of the VOC ship's journals that I have examined, indicating that there may have been a standardization in this practice. The journals were also used to note disciplinary incidents, but there is no explicitly stated reason for this. We can infer that this may have occurred so the company could have some idea who poorly-behaved or troublesome sailors were, but whether this had any impact is unclear. Noting serious disciplinary incidents and the reasons for them could potentially have protected the company from future liabilities or further employment of particularly troublesome individuals

The goal of this thesis is to examine sailing conditions within the VOC on the route from Amsterdam to Batavia using the given methodology and to determine if there are any degrees of variance that occur in relation to other specific VOC voyages. This will culminate in the final goal of this thesis; to determine whether there is a single

set of sailing conditions that exist within the VOC, or whether the daily existence of men under contract with the company varied greatly on a ship-by-ship basis.

Chapter two focuses on the journal of the VOC Ship *Maarssen*. Bound for Indonesia, the ship departed Amsterdam in June of 1746, arriving in Batavia in May 1747, following a stop to re-provision in Cape Town in December 1746 The captain and master of the *Maarssen* is noted only as Captain Taal. Interestingly, no first name is given. This omission is directly related to the lack of a title page available in the scans of the journal. The other journals examined had a title page that noted the name of the captain, the type of ship and the years of the voyage. While it is clear from the first page of the scans that a title page was written, one can only see the ink that bled into the next page. So while we can glean the last name of the captain from the journal, that seems to be the only piece of personal information that is included. Despite this absence, the journal of the *Maarssen* is an incredibly detailed account of the voyage the ship undertook.

Given the lack of biographical information available about the captain of the *Maarssen* it is impossible to provide a detailed description of service for the captain, but it is clear that he was an experienced mariner. His accounts of the wind and weather are far more detailed than others that have been examined for this project, and his daily entries are longer on average than the other journals. While this can provide detail into the mechanics of the voyage, it is less illuminating into the experience of the men aboard. That said, there were enough events and descriptions noted for us to piece together a description of the daily life on board the *Maarssen*.

The first entry in the journal was written on May 26, 1746. As with other examined journals, all the entries in this journal were quite formulaic. The appearance of this formula in all of the examined journals in both this thesis and others examined within the collection of the Dutch National Archive allows us to infer that this may have been the standard notarial practice of VOC Captains. The ship set sail on June 4, from the *Nieuwe Diep* harbour in Amsterdam.

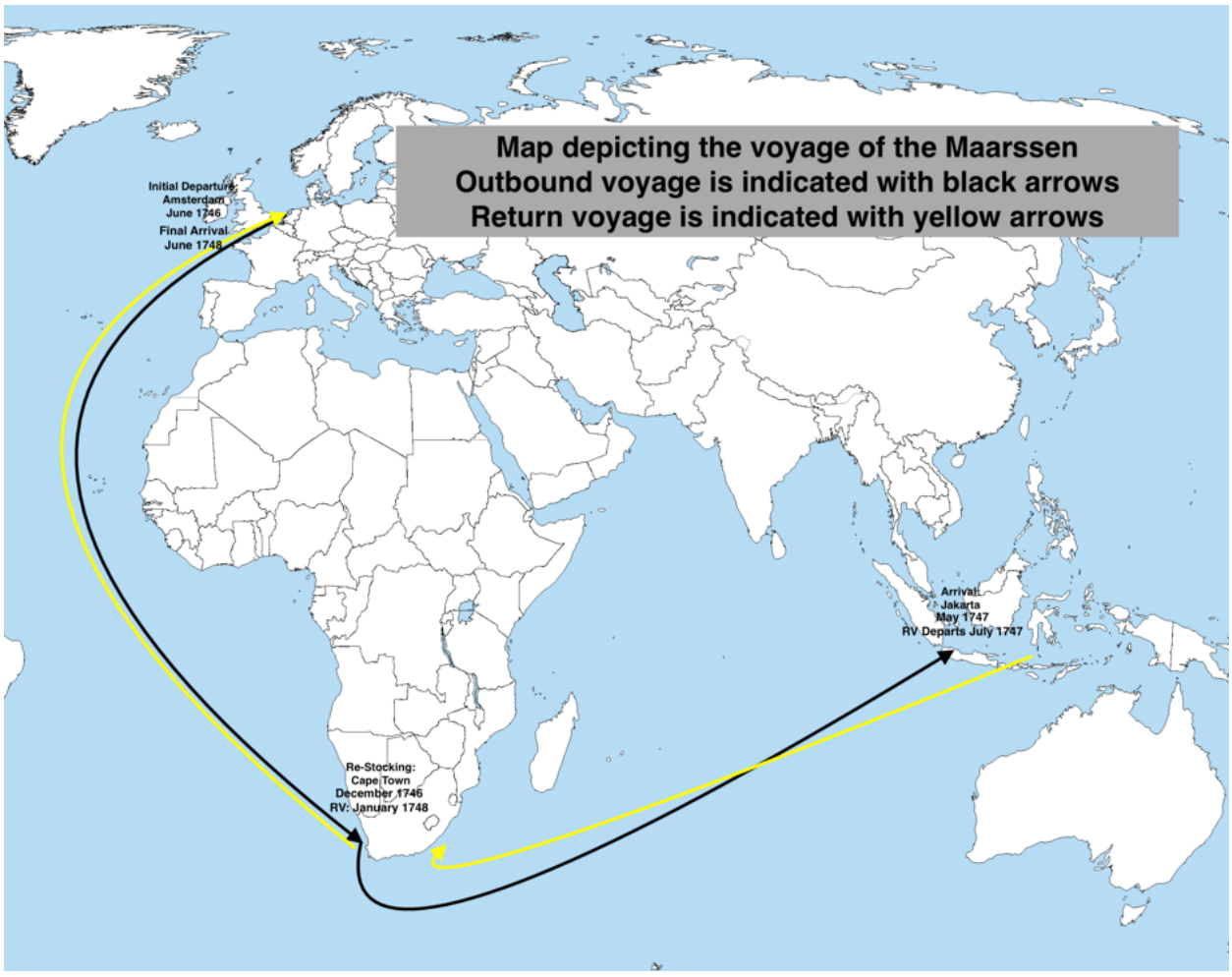


Figure 2.1 Map of the voyage of the Maarssen

The captain noted in the first entry of the journal that the *Maarssen* was part of a broader convoy, and the presence of soldiers on this ship may indicate that the

Maarssen had some role to play in the protection of the other members of this convoy.[44] The practice of VOC ships travelling in groups was relatively common, as this had been the case since the outbreak of war with Spain and Portugal in 1621.[45] Sailing in convoy was a useful means of protection during conflict, as the nearby ships could respond to emergencies or dangers faced by the other members of the convoy. It also helped resolve the problem of the vulnerability of large and (heavily laden) merchant vessels, that were "often in poor condition after travelling such great distances."[46]

Direct mention is made in the journal entry of another ship in the convoy, the *Zane*. The journal indicates that the captain of the *Maarssen* knew the captain of the *Zane* in some way, identifying him by name in the journal.[47] Taal also notes the presence of five merchant ships that were included in this convoy.[48] While the total number of ships is not concretely given, the introduction of the *Zane* by name and the mention of the five merchant ships might indicate that this was a convoy of seven. While this is obviously not a concrete figure, and does not definitively describe the size of the convoy, we have only this journal to examine, and it must thus be analysed to the best degree possible.

---

[44] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for May 26, 1746
[45] Jaap R. Bruijn, "Between Batavia and the Cape: Shipping Patterns of the Dutch East India Company." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 253
[46] Jaap R. Bruijn,"Between Batavia and the Cape: Shipping Patterns of the Dutch East India Company." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 253
[47] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for June 5, 1746
[48] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for June 5, 1746

Discipline

A key facet of maritime life was the discipline inflicted on the crew. Violent discipline was one of the major features of a seafarer's reality, and life aboard the *Maarssen* was no exception. Corporal punishment was commonplace on both merchant and naval vessels during the early modern period.[49] Captains and Officers used many methods to keep their crews in line, including various methods of flogging, keel-hauling and beatings.[50] These disciplinary procedures were often conducted on the main deck, so as to make an example of the offending sailor.[51] Different captains had their own methods of controlling their crew, and some even took sadistic pleasure in their enforcement of rules aboard their ship.

This authority was seen as vital to the proper functioning of ships, as these wooden worlds required the coordinated and combined labour of the entire crew to meet deadlines and successfully navigate the oceans. In addition, as Richard Guy states, the VOC stressed "protocols and discipline as elements critical to safety and survival."[52] Guy goes even further in his research about the importance of discipline to the VOC,

---

[49] Niklas Frykman, "The Mutiny On The Hermione: Warfare, Revolution, And Treason In The Royal Navy." *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 1 (2010): 176.
[50] Niklas Frykman, "Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships" *International*
Review of Social History 54, no. 1 (2009):p 81
[51] Niklas Frykman "Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships" *International*
Review of Social History 54, no. 1 (2009):p 81
[52] Richard Guy, "Calamitous Voyages: The Social Space of Shipwreck and Mutiny Narratives in the Dutch East India Company." *Itinerario*, no. 1 (2015): 133

writing “The ship lent a tangible physicality to the VOC’s corporate body: in the disaster stories disruption to the physical, spatial order of the ship is directly linked with the disruption of the Company’s social order and its project as a whole.”[53] The importance of this discipline to the VOC created an environment in which the captain was given a free rein to punish as he saw fit, and was encouraged to do so.

The first disciplinary incident on board the *Maarssen* is described on September 16, 1746. A sailor named Klaas Wegenaar was flogged for not working at an adequate pace.[54] Wegenaar was identified as a sailor, but exactly what role he failed to properly perform is not mentioned. Flogging was the most common form of discipline on board merchant ships, and the discipline was typically public, so as to make an example of the transgressor. The detail with which the captain describes the disciplinary incident is rather sparse, which may be an indication that he did not revel in doling out physical discipline, unlike other captains examined in this thesis.

The next noted disciplinary incident occurred on November 14, 1746. The transgressor was a man referred to only as Van Bolland. It seems as though Van Bolland was flogged for stealing from the food stores in the lower deck of the ship.[55] Throughout the examined journals this seems to be a common theme, leading to further questions about both the quality and quantity of victuals that men were

---

[53] Richard Guy, "Calamitous Voyages: The Social Space of Shipwreck and Mutiny Narratives in the Dutch East India Company." *Itinerario*, no. 1 (2015): 133
[54] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for September 16, 1746
[55] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for November 14, 1746

receiving. In the journals examined for this thesis, there were 61 documented complaints from crew members about the poor quality of victuals on board. These figures significantly outnumbered complaints in any other capacity, be it work, living conditions or pay.[56] One would assume that if the men had been receiving food that they considered adequate these such incidents of theft would not occur. This is by no means an attempt to justify the actions of sailor or captain, as theft from the stores of the ship is a clear violation of the rules on board, but merely an attempt to understand the thought process of this Van Bolland, and the circumstances he found himself in.

A third noted instance of corporal punishment on board occurred on March 10, 1747. The offending sailor is noted as being Lybrand Drukker. It seems that he was flogged for lying to the captain, but it is not indicated what he lied about.[57] It would have been interesting to know what the man was untruthful about, but alas, we are resigned to speculation. It is intriguing that there are only three noted instances of physical discipline aboard the *Maarssen,* far fewer than was typical on an eighteenth-century merchant vessel. This can tell us a great deal about the nature of both the captain and the crew. That only three disciplinary incidents were recorded does not definitively mean that there were only three that occurred, but there is little else to base a conclusion on, the nature of this project requires that we take this journal at face value. Perhaps the crew was exceptionally well-behaved, or perhaps the captain

[56] There were 42 complaints for reasons other than victuals, meaning that 59% of documented complaints were lodged regarding the food/drink the men were provided
[57] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for March 10, 1747

was a relatively lax disciplinarian. The leadership styles on display aboard the *Maarssen* differ greatly from canonical literature concerning merchant shipping, and the rest of the VOC ships that have been examined.

The nature of this project requires that we take this journal at face value. Perhaps the crew was exceptionally well-behaved, or perhaps the captain was a relatively lax disciplinarian. The leadership styles on display aboard the *Maarssen* differ greatly from canonical literature concerning merchant shipping. It becomes clear that the way a ship was run depended entirely on the captain, and there were no broad set of sailing conditions on ships of the Dutch East India Company.

VOC discipline varied considerably. Physical punishments could be handed down for a variety of reasons, both for legitimate offenses and petty religious disputes. Due to the authoritarian nature of these ships, with the captain as judge, jury and executioner, discipline remained a fundamental aspect of life onboard a VOC ship. Men faced significant variety of punishment, and this became a common fact of life aboard, despite the relative lack of noted corporal punishment aboard the *Maarssen*.

Perhaps due to the efficiency of the VOC's effort to eradicate desertion from its ranks, or due to the brevity of this voyage, there are no mentions of desertion in Taal's journal. The VOC employed many methods to keep their men from deserting, including instituting unique wage practices. These practices included withholding fifty per-cent of a sailor's wages until they completed their contracts and returned to their port of

origin.[58] These wage practices were vital in curbing the issue of desertion amongst VOC sailors, and the company began to retain a significant percentage of their crew. A study done by Filippo Carlo Wezel and Martin Ruef indicates that following the implementation of these practices, the rate of desertion amongst VOC sailors settled at just over two per-cent.[59] Keeping this percentage low was vital to the success of the trading network, as recruiting new sailors was far more expensive and unreliable than keeping around those who were already employed.

Danger

Life aboard the *Maarssen* embodied the danger that was so prevalent in maritime life. The journal noted thirty-seven deaths that occurred during the voyage. Most of the casualties were *matroosen*, but at least one soldier and the chief carpenter also perished during the voyage.[60] The first recorded death on the *Maarssen* occurs on July 30, 1746. The ship's boy fell overboard during a storm and drowned.[61] As was common practice in the examined journals, the death is noted briefly in the margin, but no detail is given in the journal entry itself. This could be indicative of the replaceability

---

[58] Pieter van Dam, Frederik Willem Stapel and Carel Wessel Theodorus van Boetzelaer van Asperen en Dubbeldam. *Beschrijvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, 4 vols. 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1927. Vol. 1, p.555

[59] Figure stood at 2.1%
Filippo Carlo Wezel, and Martin Ruef. "Agents with Principles: The Control of Labor in the Dutch East India Company, 1700 to 1796." *American Sociological Review* 82, no. 5 (2017): 1009-036. 1018

[60] *Matroos* trans. Deckhand or Sailor. *Matroosen* is simply the plural form
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10*

[61] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for July 30, 1746.

of certain positions on board the ship, as it would not have been too arduous a process to find another ship's boy at their next stop in port.

The second death on the ship occurred less than a week later, with a deckhand noted as having had an "accident." The man fell overboard and was unable to be rescued by the rest of the crew.[62] Falling overboard was the most common cause of death on board the *Maarssen* and there were eleven total incidents of death by drowning during the voyage, far outnumbering any other cause. There were also many different ways men fell overboard during the voyage, including one who fell off the foresail and into the ocean.

This incident was noted in the margin next to the entry for March 12 as "*Een Matroos van de fokke heen gevalle in zee en verdronken*."[63] This incident is perhaps the best embodiment of danger at sea, as tasks crucial to the proper operation of the vessel were incredibly dangerous and presented a great risk of death. A fall from the foresail was also one from a great height, and the man would most likely have been unable to swim towards the boat after sustaining injuries from his landing.

The death of crew members was a central theme during this voyage, with thirty-seven total deaths occurring throughout the duration of the voyage. Other causes of death were also prevalent onboard, and manifest themselves in the journal of the

---

[62] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for August 5, 1746

[63] *Een Matroos van de fokke heen gevalle in zee en verdronken* trans. A deckhand fell from the foresail into the ocean and drowned.
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for March 12, 1747

Maarssen. The fear of death was not restricted to deckhands or sailors either, and this posed grave consequences for the remaining crew. In an entry dated January 17, a note in the margin notes "*de oper timmerman overleden*."[64] The death of the head carpenter was a major blow to the daily operations of a ship in the eighteenth century, as he was responsible for all the repairs and woodworking that were required to keep the vessel in working order. His death would have required the promotion of a junior carpenter to the position, who may not have possessed the requisite skills or efficiency for the main job. This could be incredibly detrimental to the speed and efficacy of the voyage.

A solider is also noted amongst the dead, but without a cause of death. This lack of notation is intriguing, as it implies that he did not fall overboard like the majority of other deaths noted in the journal. The entry for that day also does not mention a military engagement, thus leaving us with more questions than answers in relation to his death. There were many ways the man could have died while onboard the *Maarssen*, be it disease, a fall or someone may even have killed him. The lack of a cause of death is an interesting caveat to this notation, but the lack of individuality is not.

The main cause of death noted in the journals was drowning, and this poses questions about the daily goings-on aboard the *Maarssen.* It seems unlikely that so many sailors fell overboard by accident. While some of the notations of drowning

---

[64] *de oper timmerman overleden*. Trans. The head carpenter died.
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for January 16, 1747

coincide with depictions of storms, this is not always the case. This could point to a number of things, perhaps widespread drunkenness amongst the crew or even a potential cover-up of rampant disease on board. Further research into Dutch customs of burial at sea would be required to actually make this argument. It could also be the case that this was simply a dreadfully inexperienced crew but nonetheless that many people falling overboard and drowning raises a number of questions that the journal cannot or chooses not to answer.

Throughout the entire journal, the names of the dead were not inscribed. While there may very well have been a separate list of these names, the lack of uniqueness in the inscriptions are notable. Of the three journals examined for this project, this was the only journal that does not mention the names of fallen sailors or soldiers. This probably has more to do with the captain than any other detail. The captains were responsible for keeping these journals, and the level of detail given varied significantly between the three.

Figure 2.2 Causes of death aboard the *Maarssen*	
Cause[65]	**Victims**
Fell overboard (drowned)	22
Shot	3
Injuries sustained from a fall onto the deck	2

[65] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10*

Unlisted	10
Total	37

Daily Life

A thorough reading of the *Maarssen*'s journal posed an issue that was typical of early modern seafaring. The pages were filled with descriptions of the wind and weather, ports the ship had entered and deaths of crew members, but there was very little noted as to daily occurrences. This lack of excitement or events was a factor of all walks of marine life, as there was typically very little to stimulate the crew and break the monotony of everyday life at sea. This monotony would often wear on sailors, creating that much more thrill when they finally entered port. While the journal makes no direct mention of boredom or how the men passed the time, the lack of information is telling in itself. It becomes clear that there was very little for the men of the *Maarssen* to do other than the work that was required to keep the ship afloat. This monotony has been seen in many accounts of eighteenth-century seafaring, and was thus a key facet of maritime life. Unlike other primary accounts from the eighteenth-century, there was no direct mention of how men passed the time, but we can imagine from other accounts of VOC ships and the broader eighteenth-century merchant vessel that they predominantly spent their time drinking, dancing or gambling.

Like most ships at the time, the *Maarssen* operated on a two-watch system.[66] In such a system, the crew was divided into two identical groups that would rotate on and off duty every four hours. [67] The most able and skilled sailors would work the "tops," up

[66] Niklas Frykman, "Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships." *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 1 (2009); 77
[67] Frykman "Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships." 77

on the masts bending, loosing, and furling sails.[68] Less experienced sailors would be tasked with manual labour in the waist or afterguard, often pulling the ropes and braces that raised and lowered the yards and sails of the ship.[69] It seems in the VOC, as with most other maritime outfits apart from a couple of hours of "eating, drinking, and yarning in the late afternoon, seamen's daily lives were thus mostly consumed by disagreeable tasks, or by mind-numbing boredom."[70]

Despite the clear religious doctrine of the VOC, the lack of religious fervor in the journal is intriguing.[71] Perhaps the captain of the *Maarssen* was not an overly religious man, or perhaps he did not find religious doctrine fit for inclusion in the journal. In any case, this journal seems to be an outlier. Captain Johan Arnold Zoutman's journal concerning the *Dolphijn* includes a passage alluding to religiously motivated discipline, while the *Arendt*'s journal, written by captain Abraham Taalman include various religious undertones in his descriptions of storms and death.

The journal made direct mention of the source of the ship's victuals, a merchant named Adriaan Dirkse.[72] This was the only such notation in the examined journals, as

---

[68] Frykman "Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships." 77
[69] Frykman "Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships." 77
[70] Frykman "Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships." 79
[71] For a discussion of religious practices in the VOC, see Godefridus Udemans. *'t Geestelyck roer van 't coopmans schip, dat is: trouwbericht hoe dat een coopman en coopvaerder hem selven dragen moet*. Dordrecht, 1640.
The VOC's mandate included the spread of protestant doctrine to all corners of the globe, and that "the riches of the Kingdom of Christ hang on the continuation of this commerce." Udemans p.143
[72] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for June 3, 1746

the other two captains made no mention of the specific source of their supplies. Throughout the entirety of the journal, there were no complaints recorded about the quality of the food or drink. An important caveat to this lack of complaint exists in the fact that the captain wrote this journal. As seen in this, along with the other two journals, the captains on VOC ships enjoyed a far higher standard of living than that of their crew.

The inclusion of the merchant used to stock the ships' victuals in Amsterdam is an interesting one. While it is not clear exactly why this was done, one can speculate about a multitude of reasons why this might be the case. The captain was able to choose the merchant who stocked their ships so this may have been a ploy from the captain to increase the merchant's business by reporting favourably on the quality of victuals acquired. While this could have been purely notational, one can imagine that merchants in the business of stocking VOC ships would have sought to have good relationships with captains, and there may have even been a degree of corruption when captains reported the merchants they used.

While it is true that the journal contained no complaints about the quality of the victuals, that does not mean that there were no complaints registered on board. It simply indicates that the captain either did not hear of any, or chose to omit them from the journal. The role that the direct mention of the merchant the goods were attained from may have been a factor in this lack of inclusion. It may not have reflected well on this merchant that the men were constantly complaining about the food he provided, or the captain may have been oblivious to these complaints. In any case, it seems

peculiar that there was not a single food-related complaint included in this journal, given the general lack of quality food consumed on board merchant vessels.

Wages

The constant notations of death allowed us to examine the wage structure on board this ship. At the time of death, there was always a lump sum noted in the margin, presumably a sum to be paid to the family of the departed. An examination of these sums in conjunction with the timeline of the voyage allowed us to determine the wages that the men on board earned. To corroborate our examination, the wages noted in the journal will be compared to studies done by Claudia Rei, Femme Gaastra and Robert Allen. When the *Maarssen's* boy dies two months into the voyage, his death notation includes a marking for ten guilders.[73] This would put the monthly wage for the ship's boy at five guilders per month, a figure corroborated by Rei and Gaastra's studies.[74] This figure seemed to be consistent on VOC ships, and allows for the use of Rei's table in further examination.

The death of the first sailor aboard the *Maarssen* allowed for another conclusion about wages in the VOC. Occurring less than a week after the death of the

---

[73] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for July 30, 1746.

[74] Claudia Rei, "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014): p. 45

Gaastra FS (2007) The organization of the VOC. In: Balk GL, Dijk F, Kortland DJ (eds) Archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the local institutions in Batavia (Jakarta). Brill, Leiden,
p.13

ship's boy, this sailor's death included the notation of twenty guilders, or two months wages. [75] His wage for his two months of service was thus ten guilders per month, the rate described by Gaastra's study.[76] It is unfortunate that Rei's paper makes no mention on the wage of carpenters aboard VOC ships. It seemed that the carpenter earned significantly less than the sailors or soldiers on board. The head carpenter's death was noted on January 16, 1747. This death occurs seven months into the voyage, but the notation with his death allows him fifty guilders as salary. This figure would situate his salary at 7.14 guilders per month, less than everyone on board save the ship's boy and a runner.[77] For someone who played an important role in the daily operation of a ship, it is curious that he made less than almost everyone else on board.

Only one soldier is noted to have died during the *Maarssen's* voyage, on January 31. His death notation describes the payment to his family being 60 guilders. Given the fact that the *Maarssen* was seven months into her voyage, we can safely assume that this man was shorted of 3 guilders. Rei's table notes the wages of soldiers under contract with the VOC to be nine guilders per month, which would have put the requisite payment at sixty-three guilders. [78] The man was given only sixty, so it seems

[75] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for August 5, 1746
[76] Claudia Rei, "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014): p. 45
[77] Claudia Rei, "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014): p. 45-46
[78] Wage calculation of soldier, 7 months x 9 guilders/m = 63.

that the company shorted the man. The status of the VOC as a profit-driven company with a strict focus on the bottom line is clear, and while this may have been done for the sake of convenience, it is nonetheless interesting. The idea of prorating wages does not appear throughout the rest of the journals that were examined; thus, it seems unlikely that this was the case.

The rest of the wages seem to follow the structure outlined by Rei. The death of a sailor nine months into the voyage resulted in a payment of ninety guilders, and another ten months into the voyage required a payment of 100 guilders.[79] These figures are in accord with the wage table given by Rei, whose table (save for the exclusion of carpenters) seems to represent the wages these men earned with relative accuracy.

The notation of payment next to his name gives us a clear idea of what the wages were like for men on board. Given the time between the incidents, and the difference in wages at the times of death, we can calculate the monthly wage of these sailors to be ten guilders.[80] To compare this amount with present currency values, these sailors in the VOC earned what would constitute CAD $159.25 in May, 2022.[81] This wage falls in

---

Claudia Rei, "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014): p. 46

[79] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entries for February 26, and March 1, 1747

[80] The money awarded for the death of Corman in the second month of the voyage was 20 ƒ, while the payment for the death of the unnamed man in the fourth month of the voyage was 40 ƒ

Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entries from November 2nd, 1754 and January 2nd, 1755

[81] International Institute of Social History, *Value of The Guilder/Euro*

line with VOC wage policy, as ten guilders was the standard wage for all VOC sailors.[82] Appendix A1, Table 11 in Claudia Rei's "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company" shows the monthly wages of all persons under the employ of the VOC, from ships boys all the way to the Governor General. This wage table gives us great insight into the financial gain that was available to the men who sailed with the VOC, and the reasons why they chose this occupation. The money available to these sailors was significantly higher in volume than what it was possible to earn in Amsterdam as a skilled labourer in the same period. Per Rei's conclusion, the average Dutch craftsman would earn 51% less than someone employed by the VOC during the average working career of twenty-two years.[83] The availability of ready money and steady employment were a key facet of why men went to sea.

Another interesting facet of this journal is the lack of precise documentation concerning the size of the crew. The size of the crew is not mentioned in the journal, but it was noted that the *Maarssen* was a twenty-gun ship, so the crew would probably have been of similar size to that of the *Amsterdam (150)*, a ship of the same size. It seems peculiar that an exact figure would not be given by the captain of the ship, but this may also be a piece of information that was missed due to the lack of inclusion of a title page in the digitized document. Had this page been available, it would probably

---

http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate2.php

[82] Claudia Rei, "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014): p. 45

[83] Claudia Rei, "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014): p. 47

have been possible to determine the number of men on board but given the available resources at our disposal this is sadly not the case.

While these wages were fixed, the roles the men performed were not. The potential for promotion was high for men under the employ of the VOC, though mostly for the merchants. Sailors and soldiers had possibilities for promotion, but these occurred far less frequently than those in the civil sector of the VOC.

Composition of the Crew

Research into the ethnic composition of VOC sailors leads to the conclusion that like most other mercantile shipping enterprises of the eighteenth-century, VOC sailors were drawn from a variety of ethnic, religious and national backgrounds. Asian sailors of various nationalities and ethnicities were recruited as both sailors and port workers throughout the history of the VOC.[84] While this ethnic diversity was common among merchant shipping networks in the eighteenth-century, the feeling of the *Heren Zeventien* towards this diversity was incredibly negative.[85] In 1716 the *Heren Zeventien* banned the recruitment of *swarten of inlanderen* for service in the VOC.[86] Whether this was motivated by racial or religious grounds is not clear, but this ban held very little weight when decisions were made in Batavia. The reality on the ground became for

[84] Matthias Van Rossum, "A Moorish World within the Company: The VOC, Maritime Logistics and Subaltern Networks of Asian Sailors." *Itinerario* 36, no. 3 (2012): p. 41
[85] The *Heren Zeventien* were the seventeen men who formed the board of Directors of the VOC. They were selected on the basis of familial ties to the amalgamated shipping companies that created the VOC in 1604.
[86] *swarten of inlanderen* trans. Blacks or Inlanders
Matthias Van Rossum, "A Moorish World within the Company: The VOC, Maritime Logistics and Subaltern Networks of Asian Sailors." *Itinerario* 36, no. 3 (2012): p. 43

more important to the VOC outlets overseas, and ships were staffed with whomever the captain could find in port.[87] This hiring was influential to the ability of the VOC to maintain the volume of ships that were required to uphold its monopoly on Asian trade. Had the Governor General in Batavia heeded the request of the *Heren Zeventien*, it seems likely that the VOC would have lost its trade monopoly far earlier than it did. It is also noteworthy that the inclusion of local sailors in VOC recruitment was not a cost cutting measure either. Per Matthias van Rossum, Asian and African sailors "had to be promised salaries that were as high as the wages of European sailors."[88] van Rossum also offers an interesting analysis about the composition of VOC crews and the differences in staffing that occurred in outbound and inbound voyages. Asian sailors were employed predominantly on intra-Asian VOC voyages, while fully Dutch crews were more common on return voyages to Europe. Given the greater frequency of local voyages to European returns from Batavia it can be argued that the majority of sailors employed by the VOC were actually not of Dutch origin. The degree to which this ignores the decree from the *Heren Zeventien* is notable, as the actual figure of european sailors comes in at less than half of the total sailors under contract. While the reality on the ground was always bound to be different from the demands of the company, it is interesting to see the frequency with which the decree was ignored.

[87] Matthias Van Rossum, "A Moorish World within the Company: The VOC, Maritime Logistics and Subaltern Networks of Asian Sailors." *Itinerario* 36, no. 3 (2012): p. 43
[88] Matthias Van Rossum,"A Moorish World within the Company: The VOC, Maritime Logistics and Subaltern Networks of Asian Sailors." *Itinerario* 36, no. 3 (2012): p. 43

The journal recorded on board the *Maarssen* gave us an illuminating and descriptive look into the events that occurred during the ship's two-year voyage. The journal can provide insight into the major predicaments and situations that the captain and crew faced and provide a far better understanding of the nature of the voyage. We are faced with a voyage that was rather dangerous, claiming the lives of thirty-seven crew members, a toll that included a soldier and the head carpenter. It also becomes clear that Captain Taal was an incredibly even-keeled captain, having noted only three instances of corporal punishment throughout the entire journal. The journal also illuminates the wages that men earned, the monotonous life the crew faced and the food they ate. These factors are crucial to understanding the living conditions on board VOC ships, help lead us to the conclusion

Chapter Three:
The *Amsterdam (Amsterdam-Guangzhou, April 1752 -July 1753)*

This chapter explores the voyage of the VOC ship *Amsterdam*. The voyage in question occurred in 1752. The ship departed in April and docked in China in the following November. It was sent to escort trading ships that were unable to protect themselves. This particular voyage took the ship from Amsterdam to the Chinese port of Canton (Guangzhou) with stops in Cape Town and Batavia. The journal lists the size of the crew as *150 koppen.*[89] The captain of the *Amsterdam* was Abraham Traalman. Little is known about his personal life, but what is known is derived from secondary accounts of the voyages of his father and grandfather. As in previous chapters, a micro-historical approach will be taken to extrapolate sailing conditions and the daily lives of the men under his command.This chapter will be used in conjunction with the other chapters to argue that there is no set of sailing conditions unique to the VOC, and that the lives of men on board depended far more on the circumstances of their voyage and their Captain than the company they were employed by.

[89] *132 koppen* trans. 150 heads
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *15* entry for April 14, 1752

Figure 3.2 Map of the Voyage of the VOC warship Amsterdam

Captain Traalman

What can be gleaned about Traalman's personal life is indicative of his status as a career mariner. His father and grandfather before him were sea captains, with his grandfather and namesake going down with his ship in June, 1696.[90] Traalman's father, Jan, became a captain in 1706 and rose through the ranks to become a Lieutenant Admiral in the Dutch Navy in 1744.[91] It seems that even in his service in employ of the VOC, Traalman benefited from his father's post as Lieutenant Admiral in the Dutch

[90] Hendrik J Broers. *Bijdragen Tot De Geschiedenis Van Het Nederlandsche Zeewezen*. Utrecht: J. L. Beijers, 1869.p. 248
[91] Broers. *Bijdragen* p. 248

Navy. While the records available are incomplete, an exhaustive archival search for other ships under the command of the younger Abraham Traalman were unsuccessful, lending weight to the theory that this was his first and only captaincy.

The first entry in Traalman's journal detailing his voyage on the *Amsterdam* was written on April 14th, 1752. The entry was brief, describing the wind and the weather in port, while expressing his excitement about the upcoming voyage.[92] The next entry, from April 15th, was far more detailed and was used to describe the loading of victuals and paint on board the ship, and preparing the vessel for sea. The *Amsterdam* set sail the following day, on April 16th. The ship spent a total of 210 days at sea, reaching port on November 12th.[93] Every entry in this journal began with this description of the wind and the weather, followed by a description of the events of that day. The journal is kept daily, providing us with exceedingly detailed insight into the day-to-day life on board the *Amsterdam*.

Discipline

One of the chief features of sailing life on early modern merchant ships was the brutal discipline the crew was forced to endure. Physical punishment was extremely common on both mercantile and naval vessels during the early modern period. As was the case with all merchant ships, there were numerous disciplinary incidents aboard the *Amsterdam* throughout the short voyage. The first of these occurs on May 10th,

[92] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *15* entry for April 14, 1752

[93] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *15* entries for April 16, 1752 and November 12, 1752.

1752. A man named Barent Sleerk is reprimanded for stealing from the food stores in the lower deck.[94] Traalman indicates that the man was made an example of on the main deck by the infliction of several "*harde klapen*."[95] The notation of the disciplinary instrument is noteworthy in this incident, and gives the impression that the captain probably hit Sleerk himself. Traalman makes note of the wooden block used to discipline the man, and the cries that the man emitted.[96] This instance departs from the traditional methods of seafaring discipline, where the whip or cat o' nine tails were common place. The use of a wooden block is an indication that Traalman wanted to leave significant visible bruising and other contact injuries on the man, rather than the concealed scars that whipping a man's back would leave.

The next disciplinary incident occurred on the *Amsterdam* on May 19th. Perhaps the crew had not been properly dissuaded by the confrontation of the previous week, or maybe they remained hungry and underfed. Another member of the crew had been caught stealing from the victuals on board the ship, a man identified by Traalman as Derk Heffer.[97] The reaction of the captain to this incident was more in line with the traditional elements of seafaring discipline, as Traalman notes that the perpetrator had

---

[94] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *15* entriy for May 10, 1752

[95] *harde klapen* trans. Heavy blows
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *15* entriy for May 10, 1752

[96] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *15* entriy for May 10, 1752

[97] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *15* entriy for May 19, 1752

"*kregen de cat*"[98]. The use of the cat o' nine tails had typically been attributed to the British navy but had clearly found its way into use in other maritime outfits by the time of this voyage. Traalman was descriptive of these disciplinary proceedings and had an Interesting habit of underlining names when describing a disciplinary incident. It seems that this was done to identify the offending sailors when these journals were read following the ship's return to port, so the VOC hierarchy would be able to know who the poorly behaved sailors were.

Per the VOC doctrine, unquestioned power was crucial to the suitable operation of VOC vessels, as these ships necessitated the synchronised and united toil of the whole crew to meet goals and effectively traverse oceans. Richard Guy is adamant about the importance of discipline to the VOC, writing that the vessel gave a palpable presence to the VOC's financial might, and "in the disaster stories disruption to the physical, spatial order of the ship is directly linked with the disruption of the Company's social order and its project as a whole."[99] The VOC emphasised "protocols and discipline as elements critical to safety and survival."[100] The significance of this order to the VOC shaped an atmosphere where the captain was allowed to discipline as he wanted, and was expected to be ruthless in his enforcement.

---

[98] *kregen de cat* trans. Got the cat
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *15* entry for May 19, 1752
[99] Richard Guy, "Calamitous Voyages: The Social Space of Shipwreck and Mutiny Narratives in the Dutch East India Company." *Itinerario*, no. 1 (2015): 133
[100] Richard Guy, "Calamitous Voyages: The Social Space of Shipwreck and Mutiny Narratives in the Dutch East India Company." *Itinerario*, no. 1 (2015): 133

A further confrontation occurred on June 10th. This incident is described in less detail that the preceding ones, but is graphic, nonetheless. Traalman described the flogging of a man named Jan Aubert from Texel.[101] While the incident and reasoning for the flogging is not mentioned, Traalman does use the word *duivel* in his description of the man.[102] The use of religious terminology and themes were commonplace in the world of the VOC, and the description of the man as a devil is indicative of the hyper-importance of religion on VOC ships.

Danger

The VOC's doctrine included the spread of Protestant creed to all junctions of the world, and that "the riches of the Kingdom of Christ hang on the continuation of this commerce."[103] This focus on religion helps clarify the unstated reasons for the man's flogging, as a religious violation may have been more egregious than the previous instances of theft from the stores of the ship. This is supported by the fact that Aubert is the only man to be disciplined twice during the duration of the voyage. Aubert is flogged again for an undescribed reason, leading to the belief that these incidents arose due to a religious dispute between the two men. Traalman naturally

[101] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *15* entry for June 10, 1752
[102] *Duivel* trans. Devil
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *15* entry for June 10, 1752
[103] Godefridus Udemans. *'t Geestelyck roer van 't coopmans schip, dat is: trouwbericht hoe dat een coopman en coopvaerder hem selven dragen moet*. Dordrecht, 1640. P. 143

had the authority to discipline as he wished, but the lack of a documented reason is a glaring departure from the rest of the disciplinary incidents described in the journal.

Another disciplinary incident occured on August 29th. A man named Peeter Godewyn was flogged for his role in a physical altercation on board. He had gotten violent with a VOC trader who was on board, seemingly for his lack of contribution to the work aboard the *Amsterdam*.[104] While his anger at the man's lack of participation is somewhat understandable, his outburst earned him a flogging at the hands of Traalman. The captain offers no detail to the nature of the altercation between Godewyn and the trader, but it seems clear that the trader was of far higher importance on board than the common sailor.[105] This explains why Godewyn was the only one punished for the incident, while the trader got off scot-free.

Despite its ever-presence, the instances of discipline were far rarer aboard the *Amsterdam* than they were aboard other VOC ships examined in this project. The instances detailed above are the only documented occurrences of corporal punishment during the entire voyage. While the VOC prided itself on the role its violent disciplinary practices had in the efficiency of their trading empire, Traalman struck a different chord.[106] His lax disciplinary practices may have been as a result of a better-behaved

---

[104] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 15. Journal Entry from August 29th, 1752
[105] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 15. Journal Entry from August 29th, 1752
[106] Richard Guy,"Calamitous Voyages: The Social Space of Shipwreck and Mutiny Narratives in the Dutch East India Company." *Itinerario*, no. 1 (2015): 118

crew, but it seems as though he went against the grain of many VOC captains and was simply an extremely cordial and relaxed captain.

Perhaps due to the efficiency of the VOC's effort to eradicate desertion from its ranks, or due to the brevity of this voyage, there are no mentions of desertion in Traalman's journal. Keeping this percentage low was vital to the success of the trading network, as recruiting new sailors was far more expensive and unreliable than keeping previously enlisted ones.

Daily Life

Much is made by modern scholars about the monotony of life at sea, and Traalman's journal is no different. There are many mentions of what men did to pass the time at sea, including dancing, drinking, gambling or playing music. The tedium was finally broken for the crew when the ship docked in Batavia, but there was significant time spent in-between stops in port. The majority of days passed in open ocean with no events of significance to stimulate or even concern the crew. This vast boredom was faced by all sailors during the eighteenth century, but the long voyages undertaken by the VOC created an environment that lent itself to the tedium of all the men on board, crew and captain alike. Traalman notes that the crew had even appointed a bard to entertain them with music and folktales during meals. [107] Traalman described the many drunken nights the crew employed to pass their time, something that was

[107] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 15. Journal Entry from October 13, 1754

commonplace during seafaring life. [108] There is also an instance described by Traalman where all the officers on board came together for an evening of "*bier en caas*."[109] It remains apparent that these were aristocrats filling their days with luxury as they would at home. These methods are indicative of the vast amounts of free time these men had and were thus forced to fill.

Wages

Unlike other case studies featured in this examination, this journal makes no mention of the wages that sailors earned while in service aboard the *Amsterdam*. Given this lack of information, we are forced to consult secondary research to determine the compensation that men received. Wages were the sole technique of favourable incentive on offer to merchant captains, thus made up a substantial portion of a particular voyage's the expenses. While there is no direct note of the wages that men received, we can use the time period and the allegiance of the ship to determine the wages that men earned. Given the status of the *Amsterdam* as a VOC warship, there will be some discrepancy in the wages that men earned. This discrepancy is based on the different roles required aboard a warship, relative to a mercantile vessel. The warships would employ soldiers, common sailors, drummers and a host of other

[108] Dutch sailors were known for their significant gin consumption, and the consumption during the Anglo-Dutch War led to the creation of the idiom "Dutch Courage"

[109] *bier en caas* Trans. Beer and Cheese
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 15. Journal Entry from May 29, 1754

various employees.[110] Per Claudia Rei, who performed a comprehensive study of VOC wages, these men thus earned different wages for performing different tasks on board.[111] A soldier under the employ of the VOC could expect to earn nine guilders per month, while a man who helped operate the guns aboard could expect a little bit more than both soldiers and common sailors, at twelve guilders per month. [112] Senior members of the crew could expect to earn significantly more, as steersmen earned thirty-two guilders per month, surgeons earned twenty-four, and captains earned eighty.[113] While these wages were fixed, the roles the men performed were not. The potential for promotion was high for men under the employ of the VOC, though mostly for the merchants. Sailors and soldiers had possibilities for promotion, but these occurred far less frequently than those in the civil sector of the VOC.

Composition of the Crew

Given the status of the *Amsterdam* as a VOC warship, there were more men onboard than there might have otherwise been on merchant ships of the era. This 20-gun ship had a crew of 150 men. While this number may have been high for a VOC ship, it paled in comparison to naval ships of the era. A study by Niklas Frykman put the average merchant crew of the era at 120 men, which is a variance of twenty-fife per-cent from the crew of the *Amsterdam*.[114] In stark contrast, late eighteenth-century

[110] Claudia Rei, "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014): p. 45, 46.
[111] Rei, "Careers and Wages" p. 45, 46.
[112] Rei, "Careers and Wages" p. 45.
[113] Rei, "Careers and Wages" p. 45, 46.
[114] (30/120 = 0.25 or 25%)

naval crews usually consisted of 750 men, and could even hit 900.[115] While the *Amsterdam* was not a naval ship in the classical sense, it served much of the same function. This makes the relatively small size of the crew an interesting facet of life aboard. Given the fact there were fewer sailors on the *Amsterdam* than on a typical warship, the men aboard would have to work harder and longer to make up for the lack of bodies in the crew.

Traalman also makes note of certain foreigners on board, which was a common occurrence on eighteenth century ships. [116] While these men may have originated from countries that were at war with each other. As Frykman notes, "Men who were sent up into the yards together during a gale or down on to the gun-deck in a battle had no choice but to learn to trust each other implicitly."[117] This cohesion was fundamental to the success of a crew at sea, and thus the unity of a crew was far more important than the sheer numbers on board. The ratio of Dutch nationals to foreigners became skewed in the early eighteenth century, as the rapid growth of the VOC had exhausted the local labour supply.[118] At the turn of the eighteenth century, seventy-five per-cent of the VOC work force was ethnically Dutch, but by 1770 the number had dropped

---

Niklas Frykman. "Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships" *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 1 (2009): p. 74
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 15. Journal Entry from April 14th, 1752
[115] Frykman "Seamen": p. 74
[116] Frykman "Seamen": p. 91
[117] Frykman "Seamen": p. 91
[118] Stoyan V Sgourev, and Van Lent, Wim. "When Too Many Are Not Enough: Human Resource Slack and Performance at the Dutch East India Company (1700–1795)." *Human Relations* 70, no. 11 (2017) p. 1296

significantly, to forty per-cent.[119] The majority of these foreign workers came from the Baltic countries, northern German states or Scandinavia.[120] This multi-ethnic composition had a significant impact on sailing conditions in the VOC, and forced captains and crew members alike to rethink ethnic and religious prejudices, for the sake of productive and efficient sailing and trade.

VOC Trade in China

The VOC tea trade in China is an under-represented phenomenon in VOC scholarship. That said, Yong Liu's "The Dutch East India Company's Tea Trade with China, 1757-1781" focuses on a location rather than an institution. The focus on the VOC's tea trade with china allows for a far deeper examination into one aspect of the company's trade than the other books examined for the purposes of this review allow. What Liu lacks in breadth he more than makes up for in his depth of research. Written as part of the TANAP project, this work serves to add a new dimension to the previously underdeveloped research area of the VOC in China.[121] While the majority of scholars

---

[119] Sgourev, and Van Lent. "When Too Many Are Not Enough" p. 1296

[120] Jaap R. Bruijn. "De personeelsbehoefte van de VOC overzee en aan boord, bezien in Aziatisch
en Nederlands perspectief." *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der
Nederlanden-Low Countries Historical Review* 91(2): 234

[121] The TANAP project is an organization that strives to produce a new wave of VOC research, by working in South Asia and training new generation of historians in Asia, Africa and Europe who "will form an international academic network; to foster international cooperation aimed at the exchange of knowledge required for improved management of the common heritage."
"New Partnerships, New Histories," TANAP, accessed December 07, 2021, http://www.tanap.net/content/about/new_histories.cfm)

would classify the VOC as "in decline" during the period of Liu's research, it becomes clear throughout his work that the however, the Chinese tea market preserved the VOC in its final quarter century.

The fourth chapter of Liu's work discusses three case studies to describe how complex relationships could become amongst the VOC and their European rivals, Chinese administrators, and the Portuguese government in Macao. While relations could become problematic and even violent, trade within the Dutch-Chinese-European (chiefly British and Portuguese) triangle was predominantly peaceful and productive.[122] The chapter examines tea in Europe, and how its profitability created a unique tea-drinking culture in the Netherlands. Liu indicates just how beneficial the trade was for the company, as tea imported to the Netherlands had an average "gross trading profit of 94 per cent."[123] The small size of the Dutch republic meant that tea was also re-exported, creating further profit domestically. The chapter details the conclusion of the "golden age" of tea trading, and thus the company as a whole. A significant aspect of this decline was the British passing of The Commutation Act in 1784, which mandated that the East India Company had a monopoly on all tea imported to Britain.[124] This loss of revenue, coupled with the fourth Anglo-Dutch war spelled disaster for the VOC, as Liu puts the company losses due to the war and changes in foreign law at 43 million

---

[122] Yong Liu, *The Dutch East India Company's Tea Trade with China, 1757-1781*. Boston: BRILL,
2006. 118
[123] Liu, *Tea Trade* 142
[124] Liu, *Tea Trade* 151

guilders.[125] This immense loss ruined the credit of the company, and was a direct factor in the VOC's decline.

Liu's work is a valuable addition to the field. It departs from the traditional version of an "institutional" history, focusing instead on one aspect of trade in a particular region. The author's ability to utilize Chinese archival sources in an incredible asset in this regard, as the vast majority of VOC scholars do not possess the ability to read any of the Chinese dialects. The book provides a new and engaging angle from which to examine the decline of the VOC, despite the success of tea trading in stalling the inevitable. The work is important first step in documenting VOC success in China, a topic which is certain to be elaborated upon in future publications from the TANAP project.

VOC entry into the Chinese market was impacted by a a 1743 ruling that finally allowed certain aspects of private trade within the VOC network. This did not disband the company however, as the VOC "continued to monopolize the most profitable commodities and those less profitable areas of trade from which it withdrew were opened up to its subjects as private trade ventures."[126] Chris Nierstrasz describes this

---

[125] Liu, *Tea Trade* 15
Translated into current purchasing power, the VOC lost the equivalent of € 431 229 947.00 or $CAD 621 276 066.21
"Value of the Guilder versus Euro." International Institute of Social History. Accessed May 31, 2022.
https://iisg.amsterdam/en/research/projects/hpw/calculate.php

[126] Chris Nierstrasz, *In the Shadow of the Company: The Dutch East India Company and Its Servants in the Period of Decline (1740-1796)*. Vol. 15. TANAP Monographs on the History of Asian-European Interaction. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012) 211

relationship in detail in "In the Shadow of the Company: The Dutch East India Company and Its Servants in the Period of Its Decline (1740-1796)." Nierstrasz offers this legalisation as a reaction to decline, rather than a direct reason for it. Even with this argument however, a degree of nuance is required. This private trade, while technically still taxable and occurring within VOC ports, had the adverse and unintended consequence of opening the Batavian markets to the British for the first time.[127] It is this occurrence that signaled the beginning of the end for the VOC, as the loss of local monopolies was a far more inhibiting factor than desertion ever could be.

Given the fact that this voyage occurred during the VOC's "decline" it is imperative to examine certain aspects of this decline from the perspective of those aboard the *Amsterdam*. Nierstrasz is clear and damning in his assessment of the financial issues that arose in the final half-century of the company's existence. A large portion of the problems stemmed from this legalisation of private trade, as the role of the worker had shifted. This sentiment is indicated by Nierstrasz, who argues that "Once they [the workers] had enjoyed a situation in which they simply shared in the Company profits, but now the servants found themselves transformed into providers of capital."[128] This created an untenable situation, where the company was forced to rely on the workers, as opposed to the inverse. Such a shift in the balance of power is problematic for a company of this scale, as central decision making was fundamental to the success of the VOC. The final section of the work discusses the meteoric rise of

[127] Nierstrasz, *Shadow*, 213
[128] Nierstrasz, *Shadow,* 214

British power in the region and gives very little attention to the company. While the rise of the EIC was a fundamental aspect of the VOC, it fits in rather poorly with the labour focus of the work.

While individual trade is not mentioned in the journal of the *Amsterdam,* it would be foolish to use this as evidence that it did not occur. It would have been incredibly enticing for sailors on the *Amsterdam* to supplement their income by trading personal wares and items they had collected in other ports. This would be doubly enticing for sailors on the *Amsterdam,* as the various stops the vessel made would allow for the collection or acquisition of items in various countries, perhaps that they had never previously visited. It is a shame that the journal makes no direct mention of this, as a deeper examination of the sailor's behavior in port would be a welcome addition to this thesis.

Abraham Traalman's journal describing his voyage aboard the *Amsterdam* is a descriptive and revealing source that offers a great deal to our understanding of VOC seafaring in the eighteenth century. The journal's descriptions of daily life are far-reaching and delve into the majority of the crucial themes that are used to describe the seafaring experience. Traalman's descriptions of discipline, danger & desertion, the wages men earned, the size of the crew and the monotony of life at sea allow us to properly analyse and situate the experiences of the men that served under his command. While Traalman did not preside over the longest or deadliest voyage, his journal allows us to extrapolate information about the general conditions faced by employees of the VOC. An examination of this journal in comparison with the others

examined herein indicates that there was no singular set of sailing conditions on VOC ships, and that they relied on a multitude of factors, including the captain, the length of the voyage and the destination.

Chapter 4:
The *Koopman* (Amsterdam-Batavia-Surat, October 1754- January 1756)

The third voyage examined was undertaken by the *Koopman*. The *Koopman* departed Amsterdam in the fall of 1754 bound for Surat, in India. There were a few stops along the way, namely, Cape Town and Batavia. The leg between Batavia and Surat is noteworthy, as the ship transferred its initial cargo of cloth and weapons in Batavia and was loaded with nutmeg and silver to trade in India. It seems odd that a ship would travel all the way to south-east Asia to ferry nutmeg from the spice islands to India, but this came as a direct result of the Dutch monopoly on nutmeg, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

The journal is recorded for the first time on October 4th, 1754 with a description of the crew and the departing port.[129] Captain Zoutman described the weather, the wind and the composition of his crew. As with the other VOC Journals examined in this thesis, every entry in this journal began with this description of the wind and the weather, followed by a description of the events of that day. The journal was kept daily, and provides insight into the day-to-day life on board the *Koopman*.

As in previous chapters, a micro-historical approach will be taken to extrapolate sailing conditions and the daily lives of the men under his command. As with the previous chapters, the goal of these case-studies is to examine the sailing conditions

[129] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entry from October 4th,1754

onboard ships of the VOC through five main elements. Incidents noted on board will be categorized into issues that maritime professionals faced. These categories are: discipline, danger & desertion, the wages men earned, the size of the crew and the monotony of life at sea.

Figure 4.1 Map of the voyage of the *Koopman*

Discipline:

In the case of Johan Arnold Zoutman, his writings described the instances of corporal punishment in great detail, fuelling the belief that he took some (if not major)

pleasure in doling out physical punishment on board his ships. The first documented case of corporal punishment on board the *Koopman* took place on November 19th, 1754. Occurring just over a month after the commencement of the voyage, the victim of this whipping is noted only by his surname, Van Troes. Zoutman's journal described being insulted about his lack of participation in the work required on board the *Koopman*.[130] While no direct quotation of the insult made by the sailor towards the captain was given, Zoutman made direct note in the journal that the disciplinary action was the cause of the whipping. This is one of the longest daily entries in the entire journal, and the whipping was described in great detail. This indicates that Zoutman might have been a disciplinarian of a captain and took a certain pleasure in inflicting this corporal punishment. This authority was seen as vital to the proper functioning of ships, as these wooden worlds required the coordinated and combined labour of the entire crew to meet deadlines and successfully navigate the oceans. In addition, the VOC stressed "protocols and discipline as elements critical to safety and survival."[131] The importance of this discipline to the VOC created an environment in which the captain was given a free rein to punish as he saw fit, and was encouraged to do so.

Another disciplinary incident is described in detail during the entry for December 24th, 1754. A sailor named as J. de Jager got in a physical altercation with a

[130] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entry from November 16th 1754
[131] Guy, Richard. "Calamitous Voyages: The Social Space of Shipwreck and Mutiny Narratives in the Dutch East India Company." *Itinerario*, no. 1 (2015): 133

man referred to as *Klyn J. de Jager*. [132] This moniker of *Klyn* indicates that the men were related somehow, and probably brothers. This is supported by a note in the margin that states; "*Slaagen Groot en Klyn J. de Jager*."[133] In any case, the incident spilled onto the deck, completely interrupting the service. Both men were punished for this incident, though the older brother more severely than the younger. The "small" de Jager brother received three lashes from the captain for his role in the incident, while the older brother received seven. This flogging was the principal method of discipline used on the *Koopman* and most VOC ships of the period. While the physical punishment was motivated by the disturbance the brothers caused, it may have been exacerbated the hyper-importance of religion on VOC ships. The VOC's mandate included the spread of protestant doctrine to all corners of the globe, and that "the riches of the Kingdom of Christ hang on the continuation of this commerce."[134] This focus on religion helped explain the punishment for both men, rather than the crew simply letting the men settle their differences by fighting. Physical discipline was an essential part of the VOC doctrine as the ships became places where "Dutch standards of culture, freedom, and civility did not apply."[135] The environment and social order on these ships were instead

---

[132] *Klyn*, contemporary spelling: *Klein*, trans. Small

[133] *Groot* trans. Big
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entry from December 25th, 1754

[134] Godefridus Udemans. *'t Geestelyck roer van 't coopmans schip, dat is: trouwbericht hoe dat een coopman en coopvaerder hem selven dragen moet*. Dordrecht, 1640.. P. 143

[135] Gert Oostindie, and Bert Paasman. "Dutch Attitudes Towards Colonial Empires, Indigenous
Cultures, and Slaves." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31:3 (1998): 354

built on a militaristic approach to maritime discipline where the VOC's captains possessed a kind of regency that officials in the *Staten Generaal* could only dream of.[136]

Danger

Danger was also ever present amongst seafaring life, particularly in the early modern period. Seafaring was a distinctly dangerous profession. There were many risks involved with sailing on any vessel, but particularly on a merchant vessel such as the *Koopman*. The risks included the weather on the open seas, the danger of drowning and the fear of being attacked by pirates or opposing navies. These risks led many to desert and look for new work, either on other ships or in the Dutch outposts throughout their colonial empire.

An incident recorded on October 30th, 1754 fully summed up the dangers of seafaring life. Much of the journal entry is spend describing "unstable weather" and how strong winds and rough seas made for a brutal day of sailing.[137] Ominously to the left of the entry and seemingly as a note in the margin that did not warrant inclusion, Zoutman notes that "*10 man ons overleden.*"[138] This detail could easily be missed in a quick reading of the journal, and that seems to have been the objective here. Given the

---

[136] Richard Guy, "Calamitous Voyages: The Social Space of Shipwreck and Mutiny Narratives in the Dutch East India Company." *Itinerario*, no. 1 (2015): 123.
[137] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entry from October 30th 1754
[138] *10 man ons overleden* trans. 10 of our men dead
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entry from October 30th 1754

description of the brutal weather that plagued the *Koopman* that day, it would appear that men were swept overboard. In a world where every stop in port allowed the recruitment of men to replace the dead, the loss of ten men presents itself as less problematic than first imagined. Poor weather that lead to deaths of crew members was emblematic of life during the age of sail. Sailors often had very little to protect them from the elements yet work on the decks could not halt due to poor conditions.

On a voyage with only 108 crew members, it seems rather odd that the loss of almost a tenth of the crew warranted a mere notation in the margin.[139] It is possible that that this had much to do with the replaceability of merchant sailors. Coupled with the lack of names recorded with the notation of the deaths, this leads us to believe that that the captain and his officers cared little about the individuals on board their ships, and that all the sailors before the mast were replaceable. While the VOC was not hesitant to recruit new sailors from visited ports to make up for the loss of crew due to death or desertion, it employed various practices to prevent its crew from deserting. Given the status of the VOC as a nationalized merchant shipping company with their bottom line as the fundamental focus, it was key that they were able to keep men from jumping ship. To achieve this, the VOC instituted unique wage practices, including

[139] The loss of ten men from a crew of 108 represents 9.2% of the total manpower on board the *Koopman*

withholding fifty per-cent of a sailor's wages until they completed their contracts and returned to their port of origin.[140]

The events of November 2nd make the lack of notation for the dead on October 30th even more interesting. A similar note in the margin denotes *een man overleden* with a notation of twenty guilders. Zoutman indicates that the man had been shot, and even identifies him by name (Cosman.) [141] The variance in the practise of describing deaths is noteworthy. Perhaps the identification of the second man can lead us to believe that Mr. Cosman was somebody of importance on board, or at least someone familiar to Zoutman. In any case, this notation was a significant departure from the prior notation of not even a week earlier. The indication of payment is also intriguing, as it is absent in the first notation of deaths. It was common practice within the VOC for the direct relatives of sailors who died during a voyage to receive a portion of his wages.[142] This leads us towards our next element of sailing conditions, the compensation that men received.

While deaths were noted throughout the journal, sometimes the cause of death was not. It is important to note that disease is not mentioned once throughout the journal. This is not to say that disease did not occur on this ship; it would be foolish to

---

[140] Pieter van Dam, Frederik Willem Stapel and Carel Wessel Theodorus van Boetzelaer van Asperen en Dubbeldam. *Beschrijvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, 4 vols. 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1927. Vol. 1, p.555

[141] *een man overleden* trans. one man dead
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entry from November 2nd, 1754

[142] Claudia Rei, "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014): p. 32

imagine a voyage of two years without a single case of scurvy or other diseases. Scurvy was a massive problem for maritime outfits in the eighteenth century, as during that period scurvy killed more British navy seamen than enemy action.[143] It would seem as though descriptions of disease were completely ignored in these journals. This is common practice amongst the journals examined for this thesis. We can speculate as to why this is the case, but there are certainly many factors at play regarding this decision. Perhaps the captain did not want to worry whoever was reading it upon return to the Netherlands, or there was a relationship with the merchant who provided the victuals to protect. In any case this is an interesting exclusion, and while the scope of this thesis does not allow for a thorough examination into the topic, further research in this area would be incredibly beneficial to the field.

Wages

The wages that were paid to the sailors were a fundamental part of sailing conditions on all ships, but particularly merchant vessels. Wages were the most effective method of positive motivation available to merchant captains, thus they made up a significant percentage of the expenses of a particular voyage. A notation appears in the margin in the journal entry from January 2nd, 1755, that allows us to determine the wages that men are paid when compared with entries of death from earlier in the voyage. It is noted in the margin that a man fell overboard to his death. The notation of

[143] William M McBride, "'Normal' Medical Science and British Treatment of the Sea Scurvy, 1753—75." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 46, no. 2 (1991): 158–77. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24622706. 159

payment next to his name (forty guilders) gives us a clear idea of what the wages were like for men on board. Given the time between the incidents, and the difference in wages at the times of death, we can calculate the monthly wage of these sailors to be ten guilders.[144] To compare this amount with present currency values, these sailors in the VOC earned what would constitute CAD $159.25 in May 2022.[145] This wage falls in line with VOC wage policy, as ten guilders was the standard wage for all VOC sailors.[146] Appendix A1, Table 11 in Claudia Rei's "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company" shows the monthly wages of all persons under the employ of the VOC, from ships boys all the way to the Governor General. This wage table gives us great insight into the financial gain that was available to the men who sailed with the VOC, and the reasons why they chose this occupation. The money available to these sailors was significantly higher in volume than what it was possible to earn in Amsterdam as a skilled labourer in the same period. Per Rei's conclusion, the average Dutch craftsman would earn 51% less than someone employed by the VOC during the average working career of twenty-two years.[147]

---

[144] The money awarded for the death of Corman in the second month of the voyage was 20 ƒ, while the payment for the death of the unnamed man in the fourth month of the voyage was 40 ƒ
Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entries from November 2nd, 1754 and January 2nd, 1755
[145] International Institute of Social History, *Value of The Guilder/Euro*
http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate2.php
[146] Rei "Careers and Wages" p. 45
[147] Rei "Careers and Wages" p. 47

Composition of the Crew

Research into the ethnic composition of VOC sailors suggests that like most other mercantile shipping enterprises of the eighteenth-century, VOC sailors were drawn from a variety of ethnic, religious and national backgrounds. Asian sailors of various nationalities and ethnicities were recruited as both sailors and port workers throughout the history of the VOC.[148] While this ethnic diversity was common among merchant shipping networks in the eighteenth-century, this went directly against the wished of the *Heren Zeventien* .[149] The Heren Zeventien were the seventeen men who formed the board of Directors of the VOC. They were selected on the basis of familial ties to the amalgamated shipping companies that created the VOC in 1604.[150] In 1716 the *Heren Zeventien* banned the recruitment of *swarten of islanderen* for service in the VOC.[151] Whether this was motivated by racial or religious grounds is not clear, but this ban held very little weight when decisions were made in Batavia. The reality on the ground became for more important to the VOC outlets overseas, and ships were staffed with whomever the captain could find in port. [152] This hiring was influential to the ability of the VOC to maintain the volume of ships that were required to uphold its monopoly on Asian trade. Had the Governor General in Batavia heeded the request of

[148] Van Rossum. "A Moorish World" p. 41
[149]Van Rossum. "A Moorish World" p. 41
[150] Van Rossum. "A Moorish World" p. 41
[151] *swarten of islanderen* trans. Blacks or Islanders
Van Rossum. "A Moorish World"p. 43
[152] Van Rossum. "A Moorish World"p. 43

the *Heren Zeventien*, it seems likely that the VOC would have lost its trade monopoly far earlier than it did.

Another key aspect of sailing conditions faced by VOC sailors, like all seafaring professionals, was the vast monotony at sea. Many days went by in the open seas with no events of significance to excite or even interest the crew. [153] This immense boredom was faced by all sailors during the eighteenth century, but the long voyages undertaken by the VOC created an environment that lent itself to the tedium off all the men on board, crew and captain alike. In Zoutman's journal, there are weeks on end where nothing is entered except for the direction and speed of the wind.[154] Zoutman made direction mention of the methods employed to pass the time, including gambling, singing and drinking.[155]

Following a thorough examination of Johan Arnold Zoutman's writings as captain of the *Koopman,* it becomes clear that the wooden world of VOC ships was incredibly similar to other mercantile enterprises of the era. The comparisons of the experience aboard the *Koopman* to the journals of other sailors before the mast, and the secondary research of various scholars create a narrative that is extremely analogous to the common maritime narrative of the eighteenth century. Harsh physical discipline was doled out in similar fashions in quantities. The dangers that the men

[153] Frykman, "Seamen" p.77
[154] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17.
[155] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entries from December, 1754 – November 1756

faced were identical. Men worked for similar wages, and the crews were composed of various different ethnicities. All sailors faced the vast monotony of seafaring life and dealt with it in many of the same ways. It must be concluded that VOC ships were an extension of a broader maritime world, rather than creating a totally unique experience.

Nutmeg

One cannot properly examine a VOC voyage without examining the cargo on board. In this case it is vital to provide a discussion on the Dutch monopoly on nutmeg, which was shipped out of the Dutch outpost in Batavia. (Jakarta) This was the first permanent Dutch settlement in Asia, allowing the VOC to establish a stable foothold in the region. The establishment of military outposts in the region were essential to the smooth operation of the VOC's commerce, and other fortified cities/trading posts were soon set up around Asia and southern Africa. The expiration of the truce with Spain in 1621 presented an opportunity to wage a military campaign to drive the Spanish and Portuguese out of Asia.[156]

VOC outposts in the Banda Islands were first established in 1609.[157] While the Dutch were not the first Europeans to "discover" the islands, they were the first European power to establish a permanent foothold on the islands. The islands were

---

[156] Bruce, *Annals.* 32

[157] Julia Martine Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law in the Banda Islands: A Case Study in Anglo-
Dutch Imperial Competition in the East Indies, 1609-1621." *History of European Ideas* 42, no. 4 (2016): 459-501.
460

known for their spices, as Chinese and Indian texts contain details of spices including nutmeg and cloves as early as the tenth century.[158] The islands themselves make for an interesting exercise in historiography. The study of the inhabitants of the islands is a problematic one. Early western scholarship referred to the Bandanese as a collective people, given their treatment as such by the new colonial powers in the region. The reality of the situation was ambiguous however, as villages would form confederations and certain *Orangkayas* would help settle disputes between them. [159] These conflicting identities present themselves in a similar fashion to the experience of indigenous peoples in Canada, as highlighted by Mercedes Peters. Peters writes that "the term 'Indigenous history,' and even the term 'Indigenous people,' can be misleading because it denotes a homogeneity that does not reflect the reality of Indigenous pasts and presents."[160] This argument can also be applied to the people that inhabited the Banda Islands prior to European arrival, as their identity and loyalty lay with their village, rather than with the rest of the population of the islands. [161]

---

[158] Peter V Lape, "Political Dynamics and Religious Change in the Late Pre-colonial Banda Islands, Eastern Indonesia." *World Archaeology* 32, no. 1 (2000): 142

[159] (aristocrats, with wealth from trade)
Van Ittersum, *Debating Natural Law,* 460

[160] Mercedes Peters, "The Future is Mi'kmaq: Exploring the Merits of Nation-Based Histories as the
Future of Indigenous History in Canada," *Acadiensis* 48, 2 (Autumn/automne 2019): 206

[161] Frank Dhont, 2022. "Of Nutmeg and Forts: Indonesian Pride in the Banda Islands' Unique
Natural and Cultural Landscape". *ETropic: Electronic Journal of Studies in the Tropics* 21 (1): 93

European arrival was not welcomed by the indigenous populations. Initial encounters were peaceful but became progressively hostile as the Dutch foothold increased on the islands.[162] The first Dutch expedition to explore the Banda Islands, as well as Banten, Ternate and Ambon, was launched by a *voorcompagnie* on 1 May 1598.[163] The islands were only interesting to the VOC given the unique availability of nutmeg, which did not grow anywhere else in the world at that point. After initial interactions and successful small-scale trade with the inhabitants of the islands, the VOC wanted to establish a monopoly on nutmeg to cut the British out of the spice trade.[164] These small islands thus became one of the many battlegrounds on which European powers fought for supremacy in the spice trade.

Further demonstrating that nutmeg that was responsible for the disappearance of the inhabitants of the Banda Islands, due to its causation of European arrival, is the island's lack of importance as a strategic trading post or refuelling station. The main VOC outpost in the region was in Batavia (Jakarta) and the Banda Islands are 2,559.51 km past that.[165] Distance is not the only factor in this evaluation however, the islands were too small and remote to hold any strategic military importance. Even more telling, "the land was described as devoid of resources except for the nutmeg and mace, and

---

[162] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 460
[163] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 460
[164] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 460
[165] Google Maps. Distance from Banda to Jakarta https://www.google.com/maps/place/Banda+Island/@-5.0358704,111.0790239,4.47z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x2d1588b074d454b9:0xebfe9c59f230cf6a!8m2!3d-4.5543085!4d129.9298807

was deemed unhealthy because of the nearby volcanic island of Gunung Api."[166] Clearly, nutmeg was the only factor that brought Europeans to the island, thus resulting in nutmeg being the dominant element the extinguishing of the local civilizations.

Upon arrival in the Banda islands, the European trading companies were reliant on indigenous techniques for cultivation and harvest. Prior to European conquest, nutmeg had been the main source of wealth for the Bandanese.[167] The islands were known as a free trade port, where the local population of 15 000 could sell nutmeg and mace to anyone they pleased.[168] This served as an initial degree of protection for the Bandanese population, as European traders had to buy from them and rely on local harvesting and cultivation techniques. Trade with other Asian peoples was common, as by the late sixteenth century "imported ceramics begin to outnumber locally made earthenware pottery."[169] It is also interesting to note that despite the small size and strategic importance of the Banda Islands, they were "markedly multicultural."[170] An English Captain described the islands as being "a collectious nation of many people compounded."[171] The agency of the indigenous population was reflected in their first treaty with the Dutch, signed in 1602.[172] This treaty promised to defend Dutch outposts

[166] Dhont, "Nutmeg and Forts," 93
[167] Dhont, "Nutmeg and Forts," 93
[168] Dhont, "Nutmeg and Forts," 93
[169] Lape, "Political Dynamics," 149
[170] Lape, "Political Dynamics," 149
[171] Lape, "Political Dynamics," 149
[172] Dhont, "Nutmeg and Forts," 88

on the islands from outside attack and "prioritize Dutch access to [the islands'] nutmeg."[173]

As with many treaties agreed upon by colonizing forces with indigenous peoples throughout world history, the terms were quickly broken. The VOC sought an exclusivity in the nutmeg trade that was not guaranteed in the initial treaty.[174] The military might of the VOC allowed them to forcibly dictate terms to the indigenous populations, and eventually led to the complete destruction of the local population. By 1609, the VOC had established enough of a military foothold on the island to mandate a new treaty with the local populations that guaranteed exclusive rights to the nutmeg on the islands.[175] The growing struggle for control of the spices on the Banda islands eventually led to the complete destruction of the indigenous peoples of the islands.

[173] Dhont, "Nutmeg and Forts," 88
[174] Dhont, "Nutmeg and Forts," 88
[175] Dhont, "Nutmeg and Forts," 88

The outbreak of violence coincided with the governorship of Pieter Willemszoon Verhoef. Prior to his arrival on the islands, local populations "treated the VOC as simply one more merchant bidding for their produce."[176] Verhoef had been influential in the construction of Castle Nassau, which included the displacement of a good number of indigenous peoples who lived on the coastline.[177] The indigenous

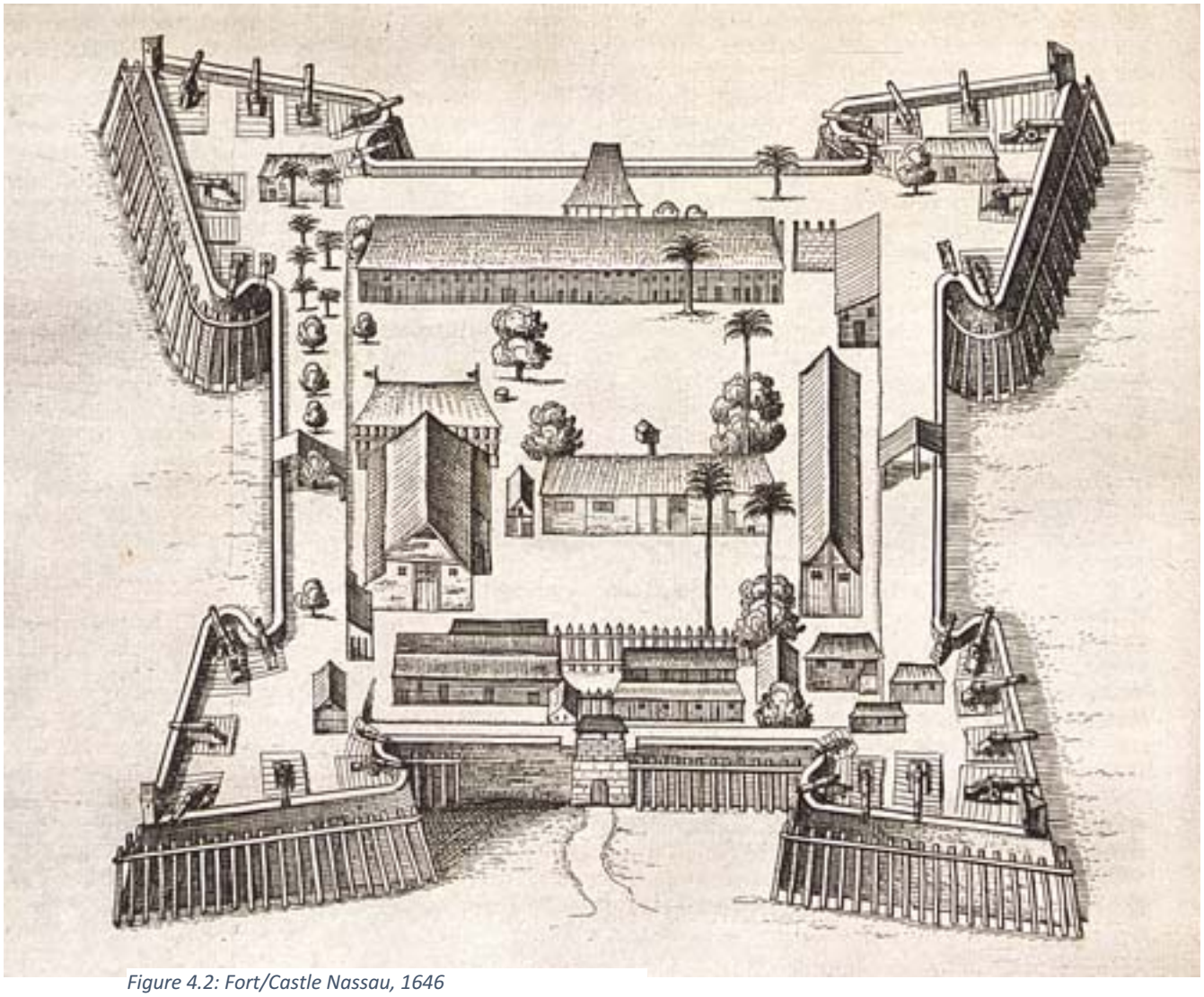


Figure 4.2: Fort/Castle Nassau, 1646

[176] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 491
[177]Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 465

populations were angry with the displacement and encroachment on their territory, and sought to re-negotiate their treaty with the VOC. Verhoef arrived at the designated location with some soldiers for protection, but walked right into an ambush.[178] Verhoef and his entourage were killed in the jungle, along with "several members of his *Brede Raad*. (Broad Council)[179] Other attacks on Dutch traders occurred in the days that followed, with deaths numbering in the forties.[180] The VOC set out for revenge, and Verhoef's successor Simon Janszoon Hoen "immediately declared war in order to avenge the murder of his countrymen."[181]

It was this war that led to the treaty that granted the VOC exclusive trading rights on the islands, and allowed the Dutch to remove the British presence from the islands, as detailed in Hoen's decree to the British forces on the islands. It stated, in part:

> We, by vertue of our Commission, and Patent of his Princely Excellency [Maurice of Nassau], commaund the foresaid Generall [Keeling] to withdraw with his ship from forth our Road, out of our Fleet, and without the command of the Artillery of the Foretresse of Nassau, within the time of five daies, after the date hereof. And in that we have conquered, by force of Armes, the Iland Nera, so doe we also pretend, and hold the Roades thereabout depending, as the Road of Labatacca, &c. to bee under our commaund: and will not permit any (the time that we warre with the Bandenesses) to anchor there. (Van Ittersum, *Debating Natural Law*, 466)

With this treaty that the VOC established complete control over the islands. The indigenous peoples could no longer rely on the British for protection or as another

[178] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 465
[179] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 465
[180] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 465
[181] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 465

trading partner.[182] Given the lack of competition, the Bandanese had to sell their entire harvests of nutmeg to the Dutch. The VOC even set limits on Bandanese imports, as "If they wanted to buy rice from Javanese merchants, they needed to obtain the prior consent of the Dutch governor in the Banda Islands."[183] This consent was not readily granted either, as it was only given if the Javaneese anchored at Castle Nassau and sold any spices bought from the indigenous population back to the VOC.[184] If this seems harsh or draconian, it is important to remember that the VOC had written this treaty with revenge in mind, as per the treaty "Nera had been conquered in its entirety 'by reason of the murder of Admiral Verhoeff' and was now held 'in eternal and hereditary possession' by the Dutch States General, Prince Maurice and the VOC directors."[185]

This claim of sovereignty was not respected by the indigenous peoples of Banda nor the British who had been unceremoniously kicked off the island following the treaty of 1609. VOC directives from the 1610s are laughably contradictory, which created confusion amongst local Dutch leadership. The indigenous population had continuously requested assistance from the British and had continued to trade with them despite the mandate of exclusivity imposed by the Dutch. The *Heeren XVII*, equivalent to the board of directors of a modern company, had instructed Dutch leadership on the islands that "If that were the case, the VOC would indeed be entitled to use armed force in defence

[182] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 466
[183] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 466
[184] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 466
[185] Van Ittersum, "Debating Natural Law," 466

of its indigenous allies."[186] Clearly, VOC leadership in Amsterdam horribly misunderstood the situation on the ground, as the indigenous peoples traded with the English as a form of agency, and to combat their subjugation by the Dutch. The local population knew "how disadvantageous it would be for themselves if spices could be harvested without their help" and sought to actively resist this imposed monopoly for as long as they could.[187]

Bandanese resistance was destroyed in 1621 by a VOC expedition led by Jan Pieterszoon Coen. Coen was a massively influential figure in the VOC, and eventually became Governor-General of the VOC in Asia.[188] The VOC had grown exhausted combatting smuggling and black-market trade on the islands, and looked to solve the problem once and for all. Coen wrote a letter to the *Heeren XVII* in Amsterdam, detailing his request to "subjugate Banda, and populate it with other people."[189] To accomplish this goal, Coen set out with a massive force. 19 VOC warships were stocked 1,655 European and 286 Asian soldiers.[190] This army was far too large and too powerful

---

[186] Van Ittersum, *Debating Natural Law,* 475
[187] van Goor, Jurriën. *Jan Pieterszoon Coen, 1587–1629: Koopman-Koning in Azië* (Amsterdam, 2015), 433–66.
452–453
[188] Witteveen, W.M. *Antonio Van Diemen : De Opkomst Van De VOC in Azië*, 2011.
[189] "noodig dat Banda t'eenemaal vermeesterd en met ander volk gepeupleerd worde." Hans Straver. *Vaders en dochters: Molukse historie in de Nederlandse literatuur van de negentiende eeuw en haar weerklank in Indonesië* Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren. 2018 pp. 90–91.
[190] Loth, Vincent C . (1995). "Pioneers and Perkeniers: The Banda Islands in the 17th Century". Cakalele. Honolulu: University of Hawaii at Manoa. 6

for the indigenous population to defeat, and the ensuing battles can safely be described as a slaughter.

Coen's methods were brutal and ruthless, even by the standards of the day. In a strikingly similar incident to the murder of Pieter Willemszoon Verhoef, 48 *orangkaya* who had sought to negotiate an end to the violence were "beheaded by the able Japanese executioners who had joined the Dutch as mercenaries."[191] Their families were exiled or sold into slavery, and some ended up as far away as Sri Lanka.[192] Every inch of the islands was besieged by the Dutch, to the point that only 1000 of the initial population of 15000 remained.[193] It took only a few days to conquer the islands, and "about 2,500 inhabitants died of hunger and misery or by the sword, 'a good party of woman and children' were taken, and not more than 300 escaped."[194] The violence that subjugated the islands and finally established Dutch control of the islands was swift and brutal, enslaving those who were not killed.

Equally important were the impacts the VOC had Port of Surat and trade with India as a whole. According to Ghulam A. Nadri the Dutch (and the English) had significantly more success trading in India than the Portuguese did. Nadri attributes this to Dutch having a "strong mercantile tradition and tended to be more pragmatic in their dealings with Indian and other Asian merchants" while the Portuguese encounters

[191] Loth "Pioneers and Perkeniers," 6
[192] Loth "Pioneers and Perkeniers," 6
[193] Loth "Pioneers and Perkeniers," 6
[194] Charles Corn, (1998). The Scents of Eden: A Narrative of the Spice Trade. New York City: Kodansha International, 170

with Indian merchants often ended in conflict. [195] This allowed the Dutch to establish trading posts, so they could properly import large quantities of spices (cloves, nutmeg, and mace), Japanese gold, silver, and copper, and other commodities. This was an incredibly lucrative market for the VOC, as the average sale value of their imports to Surat was 1.16 million guilders between in the second half of the eighteenth century.[196] Despite this success, the VOC was still dependent on local merchants and brokers to sell their goods. This reliance on the local population meant that a certain degree of restraint was required of sailors while in port that was not required in Cape Town or Batavia.

The voyage of the *Koopman* allows us to examine the VOC in a deeper capacity than just the lives of the men on board the ship. The cargo transported is inseparable from the voyage itself and is thus worth examining. Zoutman descriptions of discipline, danger & desertion, the wages men earned, the size of the crew and the monotony of life at sea allow us to properly analyse and situate the experiences of the men that

---

[195] Ghulam A. Nadri "The English and Dutch East India Companies and Indian Merchants in Surat in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Interdependence, Competition and Contestation." In *The Dutch and English East India Companies: Diplomacy, Trade and Violence in Early Modern Asia*, edited by Adam Clulow and Tristan Mostert, 125–50. Amsterdam University Press, 2018. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv9hvqf2.10. 127

[196] Nadri, Ghulam A. "The English and Dutch East India Companies and Indian Merchants in Surat in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Interdependence, Competition and Contestation." In *The Dutch and English East India Companies: Diplomacy, Trade and Violence in Early Modern Asia*, edited by Adam Clulow and Tristan Mostert, 125–50. Amsterdam University Press, 2018. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv9hvqf2.10. 129

Equivalent to $CAD 20,220,408.34 in May 2022
International Institute of Social History, *Value of The Guilder/Euro http://www.iisg.nl/hpw/calculate2.php*

served under his command. While Zoutman did not preside over the longest or deadliest voyage, his journal allows us to extrapolate information about the general conditions faced by employees of the VOC. An examination of this journal in comparison with the others examined herein indicates that there was no singular set of sailing conditions on VOC ships, and that they relied on a multitude of factors, including the captain, the length of the voyage and the destination.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

To evaluate the hypothesis that there were no uniform sailing conditions within the VOC, the aforementioned categories will be re-evaluated and the findings compared to the other ships examined in this project. It has become clear over the course of this thesis that the ships were noticeably different from each other in these five criteria.

There are only three noted instances of physical discipline aboard the *Maarssen,* far fewer than was typical on an eighteenth-century merchant vessel. This can tell us a great deal about the nature of both the captain and the crew. That only three disciplinary incidents were recorded does not definitively mean that there were only three that occurred, but there is little else to base a conclusion on, the nature of this project requires that we take this journal at face value. Perhaps the crew was exceptionally well-behaved, or perhaps the captain was a relatively lax disciplinarian. The leadership styles on display aboard the *Maarssen* differ greatly from canonical literature concerning merchant shipping, and the rest of the VOC ships that have been previously examined.

Despite its ever-presence, the instances of discipline were far rarer aboard the *Amsterdam* than they were aboard the *Koopman,* but more frequent than the *Maarssen*. The instances detailed above are the only documented occurrences of corporal punishment during the entire voyage. While the VOC prided itself on the role

its violent disciplinary practices had in the efficiency of their trading empire, Traalman struck a different chord.[197]

In the case of Johan Arnold Zoutman, his writings described the instances of corporal punishment in great detail, fuelling the belief that he took some (if not major) pleasure in doling out physical punishment on board his ships. Zoutman made direct note in the journal that the disciplinary action was the cause of the whipping. This is one of the longest daily entries in the entire journal, and the whipping was described in great detail. This indicates that Zoutman might have been a disciplinarian of a captain and took a certain pleasure in inflicting this corporal punishment and that he saw his authority as vital to the proper functioning of ships,

Life aboard the *Maarssen* embodied the danger that was so prevalent in maritime life. The journal noted thirty-seven deaths that occurred during the voyage. Most of the casualties were *matroosen*, but at least one soldier and the chief carpenter also perished during the voyage.[198] The first recorded death on the *Maarssen* occurs on July 30, 1746. The ship's boy fell overboard during a storm and drowned.[199] It is indicative of the variance between ships that there were no deaths recorded on the *Amsterdam.* This is markedly different from the experiences of the men aboard the other two ships examined for the purpose of this thesis.

---

[197] Guy, "Calamitous Voyages" 118

[198] *Matroos* trans. Deckhand or Sailor. *Matroosen* is simply the plural form Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10*

[199] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for July 30, 1746.

There were many risks involved with sailing on any vessel, but particularly on a merchant vessel such as the *Koopman*. The risks included the weather on the open seas, the danger of drowning and the fear of being attacked by pirates or opposing navies. These risks led many to desert and look for new work, either on other ships or in the Dutch outposts throughout their colonial empire. On a voyage with only 108 crew members, it seems rather odd that the loss of almost a tenth of the crew warranted a mere notation in the margin.[200] It is possible that that this had much to do with the replaceability of merchant sailors. Coupled with the lack of names recorded with the notation of the deaths, this leads us to believe that that the captain and his officers cared little about the individuals on board their ships, and that all the sailors before the mast were replaceable.

The wages were the same for all of the ships examined in the thesis. The constant notations of death allowed us to examine the wage structure on board this ship. At the time of death, there was always a lump sum noted in the margin, presumably a sum to be paid to the family of the departed. An examination of these sums in conjunction with the timeline of the voyage allowed us to determine the wages that the men on board earned. To corroborate our examination, the wages noted in the journal will be compared to studies done by Claudia Rei, Femme Gaastra and Robert Allen. When the *Maarssen's* boy dies two months into the voyage, his death notation

[200] The loss of ten men from a crew of 108 represents 9.2% of the total manpower on board the *Koopman*

includes a marking for ten guilders.[201] This would put the monthly wage for the ship's boy at five guilders per month, a figure corroborated by Rei and Gaastra's studies.[202] This figure seemed to be consistent on VOC ships, and allows for the use of Rei's table in further examination.

Data regarding the composition of the crews aboard the three ships examined is spotty, with specific data only available for one ship. Research into the ethnic composition of VOC sailors leads to the conclusion that like most other mercantile shipping enterprises of the eighteenth-century, VOC sailors were drawn from a variety of ethnic, religious and national backgrounds. Asian sailors of various nationalities and ethnicities were recruited as both sailors and port workers throughout the history of the VOC.[203] While this ethnic diversity was common among merchant shipping networks in the eighteenth-century, the feeling of the *Heren Zeventien* towards this diversity was incredibly negative.[204] In 1716 the *Heren Zeventien* banned the recruitment of *swarten of inlanderen* for service in the VOC.[205] Whether this was

---

[201] Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10* Journal entry for July 30, 1746.

[202] Claudia Rei, "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014): p. 45

Gaastra FS (2007) The organization of the VOC. In: Balk GL, Dijk F, Kortland DJ (eds) Archives of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the local institutions in Batavia (Jakarta). Brill, Leiden,
p.13

[203] Van Rossum, "A Moorish World": p. 41

[204] The *Heren Zeventien* were the seventeen men who formed the board of Directors of the VOC. They were selected on the basis of familial ties to the amalgamated shipping companies that created the VOC in 1604.

[205] *swarten of inlanderen* trans. Blacks or Inlanders

motivated by racial or religious grounds is not clear, but this ban held very little weight when decisions were made in Batavia. The reality on the ground became for more important to the VOC outlets overseas, and ships were staffed with whomever the captain could find in port.[206] This hiring was influential to the ability of the VOC to maintain the volume of ships that were required to uphold its monopoly on Asian trade. Had the Governor General in Batavia heeded the request of the *Heren Zeventien*, it seems likely that the VOC would have lost its trade monopoly far earlier than it did. It is also noteworthy that the inclusion of local sailors in VOC recruitment was not a cost cutting measure either. Per Matthias van Rossum, Asian and African sailors "had to be promised salaries that were as high as the wages of European sailors."[207] van Rossum also offers an interesting analysis about the composition of VOC crews and the differences in staffing that occurred in outbound and inbound voyages. Asian sailors were employed predominantly on intra-Asian VOC voyages, while fully Dutch crews were more common on return voyages to Europe. Given the greater frequency of local voyages to European returns from Batavia it can be argued that the majority of sailors employed by the VOC were actually not of Dutch origin. The degree to which this ignores the decree from the *Heren Zeventien* is notable, as the actual figure of european sailors comes in at less than half of the total sailors under contract.

Van Rossum, "A Moorish World" p. 43

[206] Van Rossum, "A Moorish World"p. 43

[207] Van Rossum, "A Moorish World" p. 43

These instances confirm our hypothesis, and throughout the examination, it became clear that the way a ship was run depended predominantly on the captain, and there was no broad set of sailing conditions on ships of the Dutch East India Company. These divisions also occur in comparison with other mercantile enterprises of the era. Similarities exist between the findings from the logbooks of the *Maarssen, Amsterdam and Koopman* and those described in secondary research depicting sailing conditions in other European shipping companies.[208] These similarities also exist in the structures and mere existence of the logbooks itself. The British East India Company used logs kept in a similar fashion, designed as a "means for masters to self-report their compliance with regulations as required by law."[209] These records used by the British in the same manner as the VOC. Similar logbooks were also used by Spanish ships as early as the sixteenth century.[210]

It becomes apparent after examining the differing sets of circumstances and problems faced by the crews of the *Maarssen*, *Amsterdam* and *Koopman* were of similar set to those faced by those sailing under other flags during the same era. The route travelled, time of year and the captain the men worked under mattered more

---

[208] Sluyter, Andrew. "The Hispanic Atlantic's Tasajo Trail." *Latin American Research Review* 45, no. 1 (2010): 113

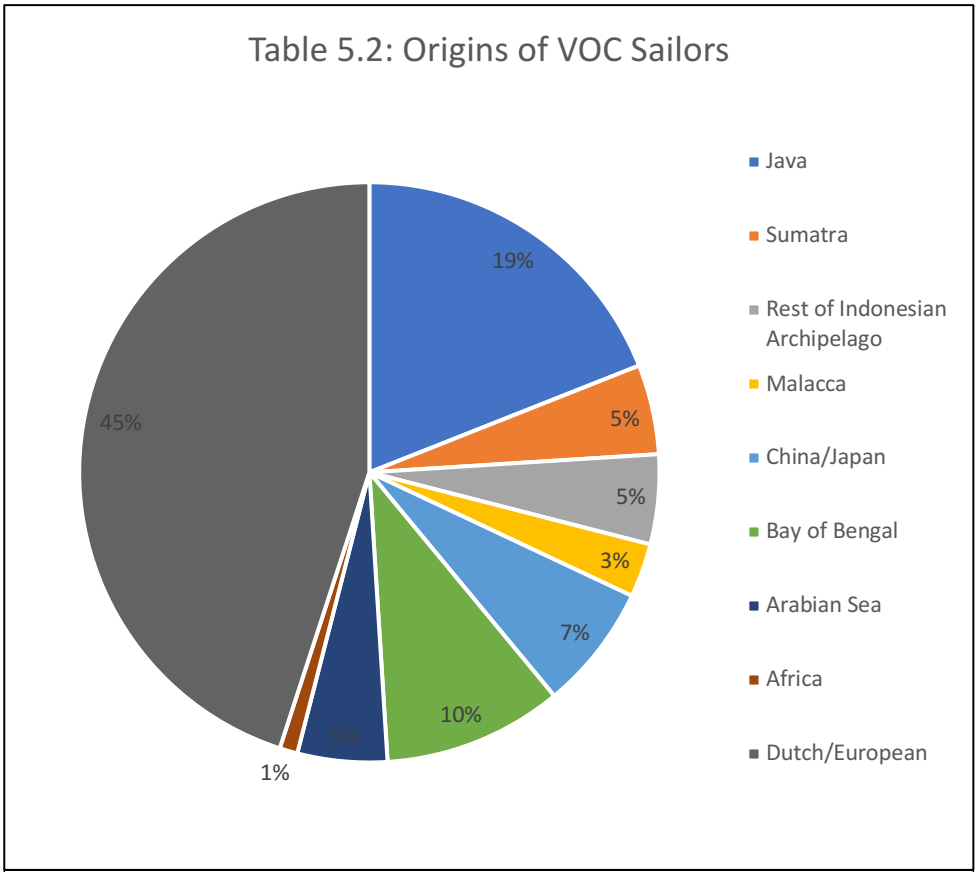
[209] Wilkinson, C., Woodruff, S.D., Brohan, P., Claesson, S., Freeman, E., Koek, F., Lubker, S.J., Marzin, C. and Wheeler, D. (2011), Recovery of logbooks and international marine data: the RECLAIM project. Int. J. Climatol., 31: 969

[210] Wilkinson, C., Woodruff, S.D., Brohan, P., Claesson, S., Freeman, E., Koek, F., Lubker, S.J., Marzin, C. and Wheeler, D. (2011), Recovery of logbooks and international marine data: the RECLAIM project. Int. J. Climatol., 31: 969
Sluyter, Andrew. "THE HISPANIC ATLANTIC'S TASAJO TRAIL." *Latin American Research Review* 45, no. 1 (2010): 113

than the company or nation they sailed for. This is not to say that there is nothing unique about the VOC as a company, far from it in fact, but it would seem that the men who sailed on their ships would see a similar experience sailing under the Union Jack or the French Tricolour. Just as in every aspect of early modern life, the experience of one does not translate to the experience of the masses.

Appendix

Table 5.1 Sailor's wage by Role	
Role	Wage (Guilders/Month)
Ship's Boy	5
Carpenter	7
Soldier	9
Sailor	10
Quartermaster`	14
Surgeon	24
Merchant	60
Senior Merchant	80
Captain	80
Figures from Claudia Rei "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014)	



Figures From: Van Rossum, Matthias. "A Moorish World within the Company: The VOC, Maritime Logistics and Subaltern Networks of Asian Sailors." *Itinerario* 36, no. 3 (2012)

Bibliography

Primary

C.H. van Marle; W./W. van Driel, Inventaris van het archief van J.A. Zoutman. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87 inventarisnummer: 1

Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer *10*

Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 15

Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Collectie Zoutman, 1737-1793, nummer toegang 1.10.87, inventarisnummer: 17. Journal Entries from October 1754 -November 1756

Secondary

Ashfaque, Nadra. “The Dutch East India Company And The Mughal Court.” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 67 (2006): 271–74. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44147946.

Broers, Hendrik J. *Bijdragen Tot De Geschiedenis Van Het Nederlandsche Zeewezen*. Utrecht: J. L. Beijers, 1869

Bruce, John. *Annals of the Hon. East-India Company, from Their Establishment by the Charter of Queen Elizabeth, 1600, to the Union of the London and English East-India Companies, 1707-8*. Vol. 1. London: Printed, by Authority of the Hon. Court of Directors, by Cox, Son, and Baylis, and Published by Black, Parry and Kingsbury, 1810

Bruijn, Jaap R. “Between Batavia and the Cape: Shipping Patterns of the Dutch East India Company.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 251–65. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20070358

Bruijn, Jaap R. “De personeelsbehoefte van de VOC overzee en aan boord, bezien in Aziatisch en Nederlands perspectief.” *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden- Low Countries Historical Review* 91(2): (1976)

Bruijn, J.R.. “Schepen Van De VOC En Een Vergelijking Met De Vaart Op Azië Door Andere compagnieën”. *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 99 (1984): 1-20

Burbank, Jane, and Cooper, Frederick. *Empires in World History Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Corn, Charles (1998). The Scents of Eden: A Narrative of the Spice Trade. New York City: Kodansha International

Dam, Pieter van, Frederik Willem Stapel and Carel Wessel Theodorus van Boetzelaer van Asperen en Dubbeldam. *Beschrijvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, 4 vols. ’s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1927. Vol. 1,

Dhont, Frank. 2022. “Of Nutmeg and Forts: Indonesian Pride in the Banda Islands’ Unique Natural and Cultural Landscape”. *ETropic: Electronic Journal of Studies in the Tropics* 21 (1):83-98.

Dorothy Denneen Volo and James M. Volo. Daily Life in the Age of Sail. "Daily Life Through History" series; Westport, CTand London: Greenwood Press [www.greenwood. com], 2002

De Winter, Wim. “Zeegang. Zeevarend Nederland in de achttiende eeuw.” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis*. Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 2017.

Eder, Markus. *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy of the Seven Years’ War, 1755–1763*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate 2004.

Enthoven, Victor et al. *The Navigator: The Log of John Anderson, VOC Pilot-Major, 1640-1643*. Leiden: BRILL, 2010

Frykman, Niklas. "Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships" *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 1 (2009)

Frykman, Niklas. “The Mutiny On The Hermione: Warfare, Revolution, And Treason In The Royal Navy.” *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 1 (2010)

Gaastra, FS. The Organization Of The VOC. In: Balk GL, Dijk F, Kortland DJ (eds) *Archives Of The Dutch East India Company (VOC) And The Local Institutions In Batavia (Jakarta)*. Brill, Leiden, 2007

Gaastra F.S. De Geschiedenis Van De VOC. Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 2002

Gelderblom, O.C., Jong, De, A., and Jonker, J.P.B. "The Formative Years of the Modern Corporation: The Dutch East India Company VOC, 1602-1623." *Journal of Economic History* 73, no. 4 (2013): 1050-1076

Gerstenberger, Heide. “The Disciplining of German Seamen.” *International Journal of Maritime History* 13, no. 2 (December 2001): 37–50.

Google Maps. Distance from Banda to Jakarta https://www.google.com/maps/place/Banda+Island/@-5.0358704,111.0790239,4.47z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x2d1588b074d454b9:0xebfe9c59f230cf6a!8m2!3d-4.5543085!4d129.9298807

Griffin, Katherine H. “Ships’ Logs in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 105 (1993): 96–123.

Guy, Richard. "Calamitous Voyages: The Social Space of Shipwreck and Mutiny Narratives in the Dutch East India Company." *Itinerario*, no. 1 (2015)

Harlaftis, Gelina. “Maritime History: A New Version of the Old Version and the True History of the Sea.” *International Journal of Maritime History* 32, no. 2 (May 2020): 383–402.

Harlaftis, Gelina. “Forum Introduction: What Is Maritime History?” *International Journal of Maritime History* 32, no. 2 (May 2020): 354–63.

Johnston, Andrew. “‘Arbitrary and Cruel Punishments’: Trends in Royal Navy Courts Martial, 1860–1869.” *International Journal of Maritime History* 33, no. 3 (August 2021): 525–44

J. R. Bruijn, F. S. Gaastra and I. Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Den Haag, 1987–1989)

Kennerley, Alston. “Welfare in British Merchant Seafaring.” *International Journal of Maritime History* 28, no. 2 (May 2016): 356–75.

Kinkel, Sarah. “Disorder, Discipline, and Naval Reform in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain.” *The English Historical Review* 128, no. 535 (2013): 1451–82. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24473894.

Lape, Peter V. "Political Dynamics and Religious Change in the Late Pre-colonial Banda Islands, Eastern Indonesia." *World Archaeology* 32, no. 1 (2000): 138-55.

Lee, Robert. “The Seafarers’ Urban World: A Critical Review.” *International Journal of Maritime History* 25, no. 1 (June 2013): 23–64.

Loth, Vincent C. (1995). "Pioneers and Perkeniers: The Banda Islands in the 17th Century". Cakalele. Honolulu: University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Liu, Yong. *The Dutch East India Company's Tea Trade with China, 1757-1781*. Boston: BRILL, 2006.

Magra, Christopher P. “Faith at Sea: Exploring Maritime Religiosity in the Eighteenth Century.” *International Journal of Maritime History* 19, no. 1 (June 2007): 87–106.

Manen, Niels van. “Preventive Medicine in the Dutch Slave Trade, 1747–1797.” *International Journal of Maritime History* 18, no. 2 (December 2006): 129–86.

Manning, Patrick. “Global History and Maritime History.” *International journal of maritime history* 25.1 (2013): 1–22.

McBride, William M. "'Normal' Medical Science and British Treatment of the Sea Scurvy, 1753—75." *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 46, no. 2 (1991): 158–77. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24622706

Nadri, Ghulam A. "The English and Dutch East India Companies and Indian Merchants in Surat in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Interdependence, Competition and Contestation." In *The Dutch and English East India Companies: Diplomacy, Trade and Violence in Early Modern Asia*, edited by Adam Clulow and Tristan Mostert, 125–50. Amsterdam University Press, 2018. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv9hvqf2.10.

Nadri, Ghulam A. "Sailors, Zielverkopers, and the Dutch East India Company: The Maritime Labour Market in Eighteenth-Century Surat." Modern Asian Studies 49, no. 2 (2015): 336–64. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24495405.

"New Partnerships, New Histories," TANAP, accessed July 17, 2022, http://www.tanap.net/content/about/new_histories.cfm)

Nierstrasz Chris, *In the Shadow of the Company: The Dutch East India Company and Its Servants in the Period of Decline (1740-1796)*. Vol. 15. TANAP Monographs on the History of Asian-European Interaction. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012)

Odegard, Erik. "The Sixth Admiralty: The Dutch East India Company and the Military Revolution at Sea, c. 1639–1667." *International Journal of Maritime History* 26, no. 4 (November 2014): 669–84

Oliveira Torres, Rodrigo de. "Handling the Ship: Rights and Duties of Masters, Mates, Seamen and Owners of Ships in Nineteenth-Century Merchant Marine." *International Journal of Maritime History* 26, no. 3 (August 2014): 587–99.

Oostindie, Gert and Bert Paasman. "Dutch Attitudes Towards Colonial Empires, Indigenous Cultures, and Slaves." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31:3 (1998)

Parthesius, Robert. *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters: The Development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Shipping Network in Asia 1595-1660*, Amsterdam University Press, 2010.

Peters, Mercedes. "The Future is Mi'kmaq: Exploring the Merits of Nation-Based Histories as the Future of Indigenous History in Canada," *Acadiensis* 48, 2 (Autumn/automne 2019): 206

Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World,1700–1750* (Cambridge University Press,1989)

Rei, Claudia. "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014):

Rodger, N.A.M. *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (Norton, 1996)

Rommelse, Gijs, and Roger Downing. "The Fleet as an Ideological Pillar of Dutch Radical Republicanism, 1650–1672." *International Journal of Maritime History* 27, no. 3 (August 2015): 387–410.

Royen, P.C. van. "Manning the Merchant Marine: The Dutch Maritime Labour Market about 1700." *International Journal of Maritime History* 1, no. 1 (June 1989): 1–28.

Sgourev, Stoyan V, and Van Lent, Wim. "When Too Many Are Not Enough: Human Resource Slack and Performance at the Dutch East India Company (1700–1795)." *Human Relations* 70, no. 11 (2017)

Sluyter, Andrew. "The Hispanic Atlantic's Tasajo Trail." *Latin American Research Review* 45, no. 1 (2010): 98–120.

Solar, Peter M., and Pim de Zwart. "Why Were Dutch East Indiamen so Slow?" *International Journal of Maritime History* 29, no. 4 (November 2017): 738–51.

Straver, Hans. *Vaders en dochters: Molukse historie in de Nederlandse literatuur van de negentiende eeuw en haar weerklank in Indonesië* Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren. 2018

Udemans, Godefridus. *'t Geestelyck roer van 't coopmans schip, dat is: trouwbericht hoe dat een coopman en coopvaerder hem selven dragen moet*. Dordrecht, 1640. P. 143

Underwood, Patrick, Steven Pfaff, and Michael Hechter. "Threat, Deterrence, and Penal Severity: An Analysis of Flogging in the Royal Navy, 1740–1820." *Social Science History* 42, no. 3 (2018): 411–39

van Goor, Jurriën. *Jan Pieterszoon Coen, 1587–1629: Koopman-Koning in Azië* (Amsterdam, 2015), 433–66.

Van Ittersum, Martine Julia. "Debating Natural Law in the Banda Islands: A Case Study in
Anglo-Dutch Imperial Competition in the East Indies, 1609-1621." *History of European Ideas* 42, no. 4 (2016): 459-501.

Van Rossum, Matthias. "A Moorish World within the Company: The VOC, Maritime Logistics and Subaltern Networks of Asian Sailors." *Itinerario* 36, no. 3 (2012)

Van Rossum, Matthias. "Building Maritime Empire: Shipbuilding and Networks of Coercion under the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) in South and Southeast Asia." *International Journal of Maritime History* 31, no. 3 (August 2019): 465–80

van Rossum, Matthias. *Werkers van de wereld. Globalisering, arbeid en interculturele ontmoe- tingen tussen Aziatische en Europese zeelieden in dienst van de VOC*, 1600-1800 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014) 448 p., ISBN 978-90-8704-419-0

Vickers, Daniel, and Vince Walsh. "Young Men and the Sea: The Sociology of Seafaring in Eighteenth-century Salem, Massachusetts." *Social History* 24, no. 1 (1999): 17-38

Walker, Meaghan. "In the Inventories of Deceased British Merchant Seafarers: Exploring Merchant Shipping and Material Culture, 1860–1880." *International Journal of Maritime History* 31, no. 2 (May 2019): 330–46.

Ward, Kerry. *Networks of Empire Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Weststeijn, Arthur. "The VOC as a Company-State: Debating Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion." *Itinerario* 38, no. 1 (2014):

Wezel, Filippo Carlo, and Martin Ruef. "Agents with Principles: The Control of Labor in the
Dutch East India Company, 1700 to 1796." *American Sociological Review* 82, no. 5 (2017): 1009-036.

Wilkinson, C., Woodruff, S.D., Brohan, P., Claesson, S., Freeman, E., Koek, F., Lubker, S.J., Marzin, C. and Wheeler, D. (2011), Recovery of logbooks and international marine data: the RECLAIM project. Int. J. Climatol., 31: 968-979

Witt, Jann M. "'During the Voyage Every Captain Is Monarch of the Ship': The Merchant

Captain from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century." *International Journal of Maritime History* 13, no. 2 (December 2001): 165–94.

Witteveen, W.M. *Antonio Van Diemen : De Opkomst Van De VOC in Azië*, 2011.

Figure 4.2

(Castle Nassau)

Fort Nassau, I. Commelin, Begin ende Voortgangh II, Amsterdam 1646, Voyagie Verhoeven, p. 51

https://voc-kenniscentrum.nl/gewest-banda.html

Figure 5.1

Claudia Rei "Careers and Wages in the Dutch East India Company." *Cliometrica* 8, no. 1 (2014)

Figure 5.2

Van Rossum, Matthias. "A Moorish World within the Company: The VOC, Maritime Logistics and Subaltern Networks of Asian Sailors." *Itinerario* 36, no. 3 (2012)