

# HISTORY OF ZEELAND IN THE WORLD

*Exploring the World from Zeeland*

---

ARJAN VAN DIXHOORN, GERJANNE HOEK,  
KOEN VAN DER BLIJ, DAVID VAN GELDER (EDS.)

deDRVKKERY

# Table of contents

PREFACE	7
NOTES ON AUTHORS	13
INTRODUCTION <i>Arjan van Dixhoorn</i>	17
1 THE MCC IN SURINAME: ACTING AT A DISTANCE IN THE 18TH CENTURY <i>Jurian Sandvoort</i>	43
2 ESTABLISHING TRUST TO ACT AT A DISTANCE: THE MCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND LOUIS LE GRAND IN CÁDIZ <i>Martijn Thijs</i>	57
3 PRIVATE VIOLENCE AND EARLY MODERN EXPERTISE: A CRUSADE FROM MIDDELBURG <i>David van Gelder</i>	77
4 THE MCC AND WIC AT ODDS: THE FREE TRADE DISPUTE AND THE HISTORY OF KNOWLEDGE <i>Lisa Bosma</i>	91
5 THE “GOLDEN ROCK” ST. EUSTATIUS ACTING AT A DISTANCE: THE CONFLICTING INTERESTS OF THE SUGAR REFINERS <i>Cecilia Uitermark</i>	109
6 THE WATERGEUS COURT CASE: KNOWLEDGE-IN-THE-MAKING IN THE 18TH CENTURY ATLANTIC WORLD <i>Koen van der Blij</i>	129
7 ADRIAAN ANTHONY BROWN: THE GLUE IN A GLOBAL NETWORK OF BOATS AND BIRDS <i>Meta Huijsmans</i>	145
8 SMITH AND YAIR: KNOWLEDGE AND THE WEALTH OF NATIONS <i>Matija Kajić</i>	161

9	THE WORLD WINE WEB: AN EXPERT IN ACTION IN 18TH CENTURY MIDDELBURG <i>Gerjanne Hoek</i>	175
10	VICTOR HUGO EN ZÉLANDE: THE “DISCOVERY” OF ZEELAND BY A FRENCHMAN <i>Alexandra Navarro Garcia</i>	191
11	TOURIST OFFICE IN MIDDELBURG: INFRASTRUCTURE AND INFORMATION SOCIETY <i>Daphne Blanker</i>	211
12	TESTING ISRAEL’S HYPOTHESIS: RECESSION AND STYLE IN EARLY 17TH CENTURY DUTCH PAINTING <i>Alec Cornelissen</i>	227
13	VINCENT VAN GOGH AND CHARLES BLANC: RE-ASSESSING VAN GOGH’S “THEORY OF COLOUR” <i>Alexandra Navarro Garcia</i>	247
14	“DO YOU THINK YOU WILL FRIGHTEN US”: FEAR IN ZIONIST TERRORIST LITERATURE (1947-1948) <i>Jeanine M.D. Verkade</i>	269
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	295
	INDEX OF NAMES	305

## Notes on Authors

DAPHNE BLANKER (Heerlen, 1996) graduated from UCR in 2018, majoring in political science and law, with a full track in history. She then enrolled in the master's program in Crisis and Security Management at Leiden University. She hopes to continue her study of the history of tourism in archives of Zeeland in the future.

KOEN VAN DER BLIJ (The Hague, 1996) is a student at University College Roosevelt, expected to graduate in the summer of 2019 with a major in History and Philosophy and a minor in Economics. He is currently (2018) working on a methodology to interpret the 18<sup>th</sup> century bookkeeping of the *Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie*. He plans to continue his studies in a graduate program in Economic History in the Netherlands or the United Kingdom.

LISA BOSMA (Heerenveen, 1996) completed her BA in social sciences with a minor in history at UCR in 2017. She is doing an MA in Comparative Politics, Public Administration and Society at Radboud University in Nijmegen, hoping to graduate in 2018. Coming from a small village in Friesland and then living in Zeeland for three years has peaked her interest in the political and human geographical dimensions of local history.

ALEC CORNELISSEN graduated from University College Roosevelt (UCR) in 2017. He majored in Art History and Film, Theatre and Media. He is enrolled in the two-year research master's program Art in the Low Countries at Utrecht University.

ARJAN VAN DIXHOORN (Terneuzen, 1973) holds a PhD in History from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (2004). He was a postdoctoral fellow at Antwerp University (VNC) and Ghent University (FWO) from 2005-2014, and a Fulbright Junior Scholar at the University of California at Los Angeles in 2007/2008. He is a Special Professor of History at Utrecht University appointed by the Familiefonds Hurgronje and has taught history at UCR since 2013.

DAVID VAN GELDER (Haarlem, 1997) graduated (cum laude) from UCR in 2018 with a major in the Social Sciences (Human Geography and Economics), and minors in History and Methods & Statistics. After his graduation he took a gap year to travel in South-East Asia. He plans to enrol in a Human Geography research master's program in the Netherlands or abroad in 2019.

GERJANNE HOEK (Wijnjewoude, 1996) graduated as a History, International Relations and English Linguistics major from UCR in 2018. She is now following the master's program International Relations in Historical Perspective at Utrecht University, and is studying Russian at the Utrecht University Language Institute.

META HUIJSMANS (Breda, 1997) graduated from UCR in 2018 with majors in History and Philosophy. She is currently (2018) doing a History MA in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Amsterdam. She acquired her first experience in working with historical sources at the *Zeeuws Archief* both as a student and an employee.

MATIJA KAJIĆ is an MA student at Utrecht University pursuing a Legal Research degree, alongside her work as a research assistant at RENFORCE, the Utrecht Centre for Regulation and Enforcement and at UCWOSL, the Utrecht Centre for Water Oceans and Sustainability Law. Born in Zagreb, Croatia (1996), she has pursued higher education in the Netherlands, graduating from UCR in 2017 with a double major in Law and Politics and a minor in History.

ALEXANDRA NAVARRO GARCIA is a Portuguese national born and raised in Belgium, Brussels (1996), where she attended the European school of Brussels II. In 2017 she graduated from UCR, majoring in History and Art History. She completed a master's in Modern Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art (London), graduating in 2018. She is currently (2018) living in Portugal, Lisbon and hopes to pursue a career in the art world, possibly in the editorial domain.

JURIAN SANDVOORT (Amsterdam, 1993) graduated from University College Roosevelt in 2017 with a major in History and Art History and a minor in Political Science. After finishing UCR, he was accepted into the master's program Media Studies Film and Photography, which he will start in February 2019. He is currently doing an internship with an editing and production company.

MARIJN THIJS (Utrecht, 1995) graduated from UCR in 2016, with an inter-departmental major in History, Linguistics and Economics. He then enrolled in the master's program in International Journalism at the University of Groningen. Following an internship at the Dutch national daily newspaper *de Volkskrant*, he obtained his MA in July 2018.

CECILIA UITERMARK holds a Bachelor of Arts of UCR (2018), with majors in History and Political Science. In 2018 she joined a 10-month European Voluntary Service (EVS) project in Ferrol (Spain), working at a non-profit organization called Xeración. She aims to obtain her master's degree in the field of indigenous studies (either in Canada or Norway).

JEANINE M.D. VERKADE graduated from UCR in 2017 with Psychology and Anthropology as her majors. She then moved to South Africa and Israel, working with children in orphan care, disability centres and hospitals / first aid units. She is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Child Development for Developing Countries at the University of Haifa, Israel.

# Introduction

ARJAN VAN DIXHOORN

**O**n the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, 1999, at Christie's Old Master Pictures auction (sale 6152), a small painting, oil on canvas, attributed to the painter Adriaen Verdoel was sold for 56,500 pounds. It is now in an unknown private collection. The work was signed "A.verdoel.Fcit Anno.1700" on the plinth of a statue of Hope at the centre of the painting. The auction catalogue describes it as:

A capriccio of a Mediterranean harbour with merchants, an elegant couple on the quayside, before a statue of Hope and a baroque church, a lighthouse, a Dutch man-o-war, and other shipping beyond, 1700.<sup>1</sup>

The baroque church has been identified as a highly realistic representation of the Oostkerk of Middelburg; its re-location to a Mediterranean harbour is only one of the various surprises. The elegant couple, for example, is accompanied by a young black servant in red livery. A group of three men, two of whom may be captains and the other a more elegantly dressed young man, are grouped around a man with a turban in oriental dress, reading and maybe discussing a letter. In the near distance in the middle of the harbour a fully armoured frigate is anchored which is flying the Dutch flag from its stern and what appears to be the flag of the city of Middelburg, red with a castle in yellow. Activities surrounding the ship on the water and on land indicate that it is being prepared for its next voyage. Beyond it, across the harbour a Mediterranean landscape unfolds with buildings, a lighthouse, and in the distance a rising mountain top. Across the water into the sea ships under sail are leaving and a galley is approaching. Towards the church, behind the statue of Hope, a ship under sail and a smaller ship are

<sup>1</sup> Christie's Images/ Bridgman Images no. CH3481774. Wrongly attributed to Adriaen Verdoel I who died in 1675.

docked. Two men are carrying a bag and a barrel towards a sloop waiting to leave for the Dutch frigate. The barrel and several bags and packages are marked with the letters FC and numbers (which, for expert viewers, could point to the freight list that one of the sailors in the sloop may be holding in his hand).

The realism of the scene contrasts with its obviously unrealistic elements, suggesting that this capriccio was given additional symbolic meaning. The Oostkerk for instance has become a Mediterranean church. The realistic entrance of the church has been extended with a rising open structure on red marble pillars and a tympanum carrying an (illegible) text and three statues: two classical figures (possibly philosophers or apostles) and on top a male figure with a pilgrim's-staff accompanied by a dog (possibly a reference to St Rochus). Moreover, two obelisks are rising between the open hall and the statue of Hope. Apart from their size, they are strikingly reminiscent of the small obelisks that in reality are part of the stairs leading to the main entrance of the Oostkerk. Finally, a man who seems to be a beggar is seated in the shadow of a building to the left, with a cannon barrel to his right. The entire setting of a Middelburg building which itself is referencing classical antiquity, in a cityscape loaded with more references to that paradigm of wealth, power and splendour, combined with references to poverty and war on the one hand and foreign trade on the other, is most certainly meant to invoke reflections on the part of the viewer. The statue of Hope in the middle embodies these contrasting and paradoxical themes: on its pedestal two satyrs are pouring water into a basin of which two sides show scenes of warfare. The re-location of Middelburg and its trade to a classicizing landscape, in combination with the statue of Hope, could very well be symbolizing the hope for prosperity through foreign trade, for himself, his family and his city, of the unknown commissioner of the painting.

The presence of the initials FC on barrels and packages may well be an indication for the identity of this patron. It is unlikely that such initials had been added if the painting had been produced for the market. The Oostkerk and the references to foreign trade add further clues that the painting must have been commissioned in Middelburg. Given the fact that the painting was signed by Adriaen Verdoel in 1700, it must have been produced by Verdoel II (his father died in 1675). Verdoel I was active in Vlissingen, but the son became a member of the guild of St Luke in Middelburg in 1675. His capriccio belongs to a genre of architectural fantasy pioneered by mid-seventeenth century Italian painters. It combines actual and fictional buildings, ancient ruins and statues in fantastical scenes. Verdoel junior's

capriccio may have been inspired by similar capriccio-paintings of his Amsterdam colleague Abraham Storck. As the painting was made in Middelburg in 1700 with a strong reference to the city, we can assume that its patron must be sought in the Middelburg scene of wealthy ship-owners and merchants.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, the initials FC are not too common in the commercial world of Middelburg around 1700. In fact, the only likely candidate seems to be the Middelburg ship-owner, merchant and fabricant Francois Christiaensen (1649-1709). He was a well-connected figure, who in 1702 was in a business association with Johan Boudaen Courten and Johan Walrand Sandra. He produced and sold gunpowder, had a bookkeeping office, and was engaged in privateering and in illicit trade on the African coast. He was also active in the Mediterranean trade and in 1696 he was a co-founder and first member of the *Directie van de Levantsche Handel*, a new corporation modelled on similar ones in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, meant to stimulate Middelburg's trade in the Mediterranean. What is more, he co-owned a ship with his cousin Pieter de la Ruë senior. Coincidence or not, this ship was called *de Hoop*.<sup>3</sup>

If the wider context is taken into account, the capriccio can be seen as an expression of the aspirations of the cluster of a few dozen families that dominated economic, political, cultural and even religious life of Middelburg (and by extension Zeeland, the Dutch Republic, the wider North Sea region and even parts of the world) at the time. A similar aspiration was certainly expressed in the founding documents of the *Commercie Compagnie der stad Middelburg* (now known under its VOC- and WIC-inspired acronym the MCC). The company was incorporated by the city of Middelburg on July 13, 1720, during the height of the South Sea Bubble, upon the initiative of a group of local mer-

2 See A. Jager, "Galey-schilders" en "dosijnwerck": De productie, distributie en consumptie van goedkope historiestukken in zeventiende-eeuws Amsterdam' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2016), 354-355; Adriaan van der Willigen and Fred Meijer, *A dictionary of Dutch and Flemish still-life painters working in oils, 1525-1725* (Leiden: Primavera Press, 2003), 203; A. Bredius, 'De gildeboeken van St. Lucas te Middelburg', *Archief voor Nederlandsche Kunstgeschiedenis*, 6 (1884-1887), 106-264, esp. 228-229. I owe these references to Pepijn Suurmeijer's 'Adriaen Verdoel II, the Forgotten Paulus Potter. Lost in the Shadow of his Father' (Undergraduate research paper, UCR Middelburg, 2017).

3 Johan Francke, "*Utiliteyt voor de gemeene saake.*" *De Zeeuwse commissievaart en haar achterban tijdens de Negenjarige Oorlog, 1688-1697* (Middelburg: KZGW, 2001), 364-370; M. van der Bijl, *Idee en Interest. Voorgeschiedenis, verloop en achtergronden van de politieke twisten in Zeeland en vooral in Middelburg tussen 1702 en 1715* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1981), in particular appendix XVIII: genealogy of the De la Rue, Christiaense-Van de Putte families.

chants. Hermanus Christiaensen, son of the probable patron of the Verdoel capriccio, Pieter de la Ruë sr (cousin of his father Francois Christiaensen), and Hermanus van de Putte (uncle of Hermanus Christiaensen, brother-in-law of his father Francois), were among the initiators of the project.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike most of the projects that were initiated in 1720 on both sides of the North Sea in England, Holland, and Zeeland, the MCC survived the collapse of the Bubble and became deeply embedded in the economy of the island of Walcheren and in the labour markets of the region. The motives behind the establishment of the company have not been deeply investigated, but several of the openly stated ones can be related to a hope for prosperity through foreign trade similar to that expressed in the capriccio. They may well be the expression of a much more deeply rooted set of ideas on how to generate and retain prosperity developed in the region that remain likewise un-investigated. Historians of the Republic have been more interested in uncovering the private interests of individuals and powerful or aspiring families, than in investigating the development of ideas and projects focused on the common good.<sup>5</sup>

The study of the MCC clearly shows this preference as well. Yet its wider economic, political, and cultural contexts call for a more in-depth study not only of how private and public interests intersected in practice, but also of how they were perceived to do so at the time. After all, the seventeenth and eighteenth century saw the rise of political economy as a field of inquiry, and it has recently become more evident that the Low Countries had a long history of thinking about ways to perfect the generation and maintenance of prosperity, stretching back at least to seminal works such as *Dye Cronycke van Zeelandt* published in Antwerp in 1551, written by the Veere pharmacist Jan Jansz Reygersberch van Cortgene or the *Descrittione dei tutti Paesi Bassi*, also published in Antwerp, on the eve of the Revolt in 1567, written by the Florentine merchant and long-time resident of Antwerp, Ludovico Guicciardini.<sup>6</sup> A chronicle, a

4 R. Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC. Opkomst, Bloei en Ondergang* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2014), 24-29. See also Helen J. Paul, *The South Sea Bubble. An Economic History of its Origins and Consequences* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2011).

5 See however Oskar Gelderblom (ed.), *The Political Economy of the Dutch Republic* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).

6 See Arjan van Dixhoorn, 'De metamorfosen van Zeeland: Dye Cronyke van Zeelandt (1551) als filosofisch traktaat', in: Johanna Bundschuh (ed.), *Literatuur en kennis*, special issue of *Internationale Neerlandistiek*, 55 (2017) 2, 91-114; idem, 'The Prosperity of Belgica and the Virtues of Antwerp: Guicciardini's *Descrittione di tutti Paesi Bassi*', in: Christine Göttler, Bart Ramakers, and Joanna Woodall (eds.), *Trading Values. Cultural Translation in Early Modern Antwerp*, special issue *Netherlands Yearbook for the History of Art* (2014), 76-107.

cosmography, a small capriccio painting possibly commissioned by a Middelburg businessman, documents related to the founding of a company such as the MCC, a collection of prints mocking and criticizing the financial projects of the Bubble of 1720,<sup>7</sup> or the frontispiece and introductory sections of the *Verhandelingen*, the journal of the *Zeeuwsch Genootschap* (a learned society from Vlissingen that was recognized by the States of Zeeland in 1769), these are traces from the past, that allow us to reconstruct how creating prosperity was envisioned and put into practice and, also, what role knowledge was awarded in this cycle. In the social history of knowledge, each of these traces (on paper or on canvas) are seen as little tools with which knowledge about (an aspect of) the world can be created, re-shaped, organized, inscribed, stored and passed on for future use.<sup>8</sup>

The idea of the “interest of Zeeland,” which came to a full development at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>9</sup> was grounded in a cosmographical-chorographical tradition starting with *Dye Cronycke van Zeelandt* by Jan Jansz Reygersberch. The book, a philosophical text shaped as a chronicle, uses the method of chronology and the study of documents and witnesses to determine how the people of Zeeland and their government should best deal with the nature of the region in order to create and sustain security and prosperity. Reygersberch defined the nature of the region as the metamorphosis of land into sea, and sea into land, in a never-ending cycle of giving and taking. It was the responsibility of the inhabitants of the region to use the gifts of nature (deep harbours or fertile lands, good fishing waters) to their advantage, and prevent disaster through good governance (work in harmony, protect land and ports, and use foresight). The text deeply influenced thinking about the nature of the region, creating an idea of its relationship between land and sea, danger and prosperity that is used to define its characteristics up till today. Yet, between 1551, and today, a series of significant shifts have also altered some of the elements of the grand narrative created by Reygersberch. Most importantly, when Reygersberch wrote his book, he was deeply affected by the devastating floods of recent decades, in particular the flood of 1531 which destroyed his native town of Cortgene and

---

7 See Goetzman, W.N., Catherine Labio, K. Geert Rouwenhorst and Timothy G. Young (eds.), *The Great Mirror of Folly. Finance, culture, and the crash of 1720* (New Haven/ London: Yale University Press, 2013).

8 Peter Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge/Malden: Polity Press, 2016).

9 See for example Joseph Hill, *The Interest of these United Provinces being a Defence of the Zeelanders Choice [...]* (Middelburg: Thomas Berry, 1673).