

*The life of a Dutch East India Company sailor*

## Roelof van Gelder

### Naporra's Detour

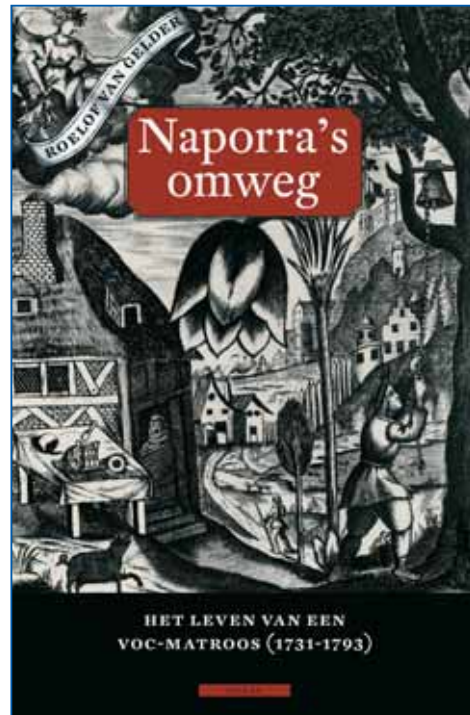
**I**N 1757, GEORG NAPORRA began the chronicle of his life, which produced a unique document. The first part of Naporra's autobiography, covering his youth and his life as a sailor in the service of the Dutch East India Company, was discovered a few years ago by the historian Roelof van Gelder in the Rotterdam Maritime Museum. The detailed hand-written descriptions provide a probing look into life on board an East Indiaman, seen through the eyes of a member of the crew.

Naporra was just twenty-five, but had already seen more than most people in an entire lifetime. Born into a free farming family in East Prussia, he had left for Amsterdam and joined the East India Company. He had sailed to the Dutch East Indies and, unlike many of his comrades, had survived both the outbound and the homeward voyage.

In Naporra's Detour which is based on Naporra's life story, supplemented by information from numerous other sources, Van Gelder reconstructs the division of labour on board, the disease and dangers that threatened the crew, and the relationships between officers and men. Naporra was an accurate observer, even noting down the weekly menu served to the crew. Although he is discreet about the regular incidence of sodomy, Van Gelder still succeeds in describing the extent of this phenomenon and the strict punishments it carried.

Like many another seaman, Georg Naporra continually cursed his lot in life. How someone nevertheless ends up joining the merchant navy is described in the first part of Naporra's chronicle. Superfluous on his father's farm, too good for the life of a lackey and a failure as a merchant's assistant, he is seduced by the mystery of the Orient and the promise of getting rich quickly.

He finally succeeded in the latter. Naporra ends up a well-to-do merchant in Danzig, probably trading in spices. For the last part of the story, Van Gelder could not draw on Naporra's autobiography, as the second part is still missing. Thanks to his wide knowledge of history, local research and, above all, his lively pen, the reader is steeped in the rich details of his later life. In this book, it is as if Naporra's voice from the past is recounting his life story to us personally.



Roelof van Gelder is a historian and editor of the daily NRC Handelsblad. He has published books about the history of Amsterdam (*Amsterdam from 1275 to 1795*) and the Dutch East India Company (*Traces of the Company, The Dutch East Indian Adventure and In the Company's Service*).

#### THE PRESS ON *THE DUTCH EAST INDIAN ADVENTURE*:

Roelof van Gelder has unearthed a great many unknown and fascinating sources and has dug deeply for supplementary material, largely in obscure German libraries and archives.

NRC HANDELSBLAD

What makes Naporra's Detour above all else so fascinating is that nothing, not one single thing, is made up or romanticized... In this way the collaboration of the friends Naporra and Van Gelder has given rise to a unique portrait of the eighteenth century.

GEERT MAK IN NRC HANDELSBLAD

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**Sample translation from**

*Naporra's Detour*

*The life of a Dutch East India Company sailor*

by Roelof van Gelder

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**Translated by Wendie Shaffer**

**Chapter 13**  
**Towards the Cape of Good Hope**

*Heat, sickness, storm*

For the first few days after leaving the Cape Verde Islands the good weather held. On the first day there was a light breeze from the land, which felt cooling at sea. Their ship *De Drie Papegaaien* (*The Three Parrots*) followed a south-westerly course and sailed over smooth waters. But refreshing as the stay on São Tiago may have been and promising as these first days after their departure were, wretched times were soon to follow. The ship was approaching the equator and soon the crew were suffering unbearably from the tropical heat. Georg had a hard time of it with his sunburnt back and found the work very heavy. Every other day he had to fetch food from the ship's hold but it was impossible to endure the heat down there longer than a couple of hours. Because of the heat the small oil lamps went out and Georg's clothes were so soaked in sweat that when he emerged it

was as if he'd been lying in water. Every time he came up on deck he grabbed a pail of seawater and doused it over his head to cool off.

The number of sick started to rise, as was frequently noted after a stay at the Cape Verde Islands. However tasty the fruits there, however delicious the beef, the coconuts and the fresh water, and however quickly the cases of scurvy cleared up, something must have been contaminated. It proved difficult to find any satisfactory explanation for this but a report drawn up a couple of years later summed up a series of possible causes.<sup>1</sup> The ships were overcrowded and many of those on board had been sick on arrival and wearing 'filthy rotten clothing'; they carried with them an unbearable and contagious stench; the beer was of a poor quality, there were too few air vents on the lower decks, food during the winter months was often insufficient and the ships' surgeons excelled in their incompetence. The report mentioned in particular the negative aspects of a stay on São Tiago: the Bay of Praia was small and dangerous and it cost enormous effort for the men to roll the water barrels several feet into the sea in order to load them onto the longboat. Furthermore, the men often ate unripe oranges and limes, while the water from the well that lay two or three hundred feet inshore was 'tasteless and brackish' and unfit for drinking without boiling. Although there was better water further inland it was difficult to get there and the road led through a swamp.

For Georg's contemporaries, the link between diet and disease was not obvious; the sickness was most probably due to the poor quality of the water. Five weeks after leaving the Netherlands the ship's supply of beer was used up and the water barrels were broached. It seems likely that salmonella bacteria, *Salmonella typhosa*, which caused typhoid fever, had developed in these, after an incubation period of five weeks – thus a total of ten weeks after setting sail. Furthermore, the wells on São Tiago were dirty and muddy and contained salmonella bacteria; the results of this were only felt after the men had been at sea again quite some time. Another possibility is that the men contracted malaria on São Tiago.<sup>2</sup> Complaints about the high numbers of sick and dying certainly came

to the ears of the directors of the Dutch East India Company and they tried to work out the causes and the cures. In the eighteenth century blame was generally laid upon the wretched conditions the future mariners encountered at the hands of the *Seelenverkäufer*, the sharks who negotiated the ‘contract’ with the Company and the poor diet; but no structural remedies were implemented.

Because the sick men on *The Three Parrots* were too weak to climb in and out of their hammocks, the ship’s carpenters made wooden plank beds on the starboard side between-decks, running from the main mast to the fore of the ship. It was a pitiful sight, declared Georg, ‘such as might move even a stone’, with men groaning, wailing, moaning and lamenting, parched with thirst and lying in their death throes.<sup>3</sup> But, he went on, no one pays any attention, there is no sympathy and no compassion. Nor, according to Georg, did Simon Boppius, the Dutch Reformed chaplain employed by the Dutch East India Company, treat them as might have been expected. He was far too ‘comfortable’ and shirked his duties. If the sick men who called for him were not Dutch Reformed, he refused to attend to them. In such cases his job was done by one of the ‘comforters of the sick’, or carers.

Despite Boppius’ prayers, and the long official list of medicines issued to the ship’s surgeon Maas Bax, even despite the gentle care of the comforters of the sick, everyone was powerless in the face of the infections that swept through the ship – though they might privately have thought otherwise. This was just as well, for the tiny spark of hope they offered might have helped support a suffering soul or given someone the strength to hold out a little longer.

Twice a day Maas Bax held his surgery. This was announced by one of the cabin boys striking the main mast with a pole and calling out:

Come lame men and blind  
Be not shamed, never mind  
Come and be healed  
Here by the main mast  
Your doctor waits fast  
His skill to reveal.

Then the sick would come to the quarterdeck, walking – or in many cases crawling – for a consultation with Maas Bax. In those days the practice of medicine was still based on the teachings of the second-century Greco-Roman physician Galen. He had developed the theory of the four humours, that is, that the health of the human body depends upon a certain balance being maintained by the four bodily fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile.

People knew from experience that besides seasickness – which would pass of its own accord – a great number of other sicknesses could develop aboard a Dutch East Indiaman. In *Scheepsgeneesoeffening* (Medicinal practice aboard ship) the surgeon Arent Blankert, who sailed to the East Indies five times between 1695 and 1712, discussed about twenty ‘maritime’ diseases. The book is a systematic description, first of the symptoms, then of the causes, the diagnoses and the cures. When describing the symptoms his chief consideration was the body fluids. He provided graphic descriptions of the types of blood – thick, thin, and acid, of the shape of the excrement, of the urine and the various ways in which phlegm, or mucus, can be coughed up, and of the kinds of suppuration from ulcers that have burst or been lanced, or the pus from abscesses.

The causes were threefold: there were external circumstances, such as the temperature and the ‘mal air’; or the patient might be living wrongly – this usually implied excessive sexual activity and excessive alcohol, wine, beer, Dutch gin or arrack; and thirdly there was bad diet. The remedies were a logical conclusion of the theory: the poisonous substances must be purged. This was done by forcing regurgitation, taking laxatives, cough drinks, sweat cures, medicine to stimulate urination and of course by leeching and extensive blood-letting. It was thought that by opening a vein and drawing off a quantity of ‘impure’ blood the body’s balance of the four fluids could be restored. In addition, a good manner of living would restore the patient to health and thirdly, the doctor could prescribe medicines.

Doctors' reports and accounts of other seafarers do not always make it clear exactly what sickness is being described, but certain symptoms are clearly recognisable. In the early stages of a voyage the ship's doctor would regularly encounter three clinical conditions: fevers caused by infections, diseases of the respiratory tracts, and rheumatic complaints. Later in the trip there would also be infections of a gastric nature such as diarrhoea caused by eating rancid pork grease, dysentery and spotted typhus. The latter is carried by lice which breed preferably in dirty sweaty clothing and then infect people. It was these lice (or their droppings) which Georg had seen shortly after the start of the journey covering his newly-bought shirt, which he had promptly thrown into the sea. It was lucky for Georg that he had the strength of mind to throw away his new shirt and never put on another during the trip, thereby avoiding becoming infected with spotted, or epidemic, typhus.

The most common disease was scurvy. It began with heartburn, apathy and lethargy, pain around the heart, fever, a burning sensation in the urinary tract, dizzy spells and palpitations, reddish-brown flecks on the legs and swellings which could turn into infected ulcers. Swollen and bleeding gums with loosened teeth were another symptom. If the sickness took hold of a patient the blood would become 'thick and sticky' and even 'pungent' and contaminated. The patient produced 'black burning excrement' and there were swellings under the skin and around the teeth, while the whole body became covered in reddish-brown flecks. The remedy lay in fresh food and clean air, and for those at sea lemon or lime juice, rocket, otherwise known as scurvy grass (*Brassicaceae*), and mustard also eased this deficiency disease. On top of this the ship's surgeon Blankert prescribed medicines 'to improve the blood'. He was correct to recommend dietary additions. Scurvy is caused by a lack of vitamin C which is required to produce the protein collagens which in turn are essential for maintaining good condition of the skin and bone tissue and walls of the blood vessels. As early as the sixteenth century it was known that rocket had a medicinal effect, together with a variety of veronica (*Veronica beccabunga*) and oranges. In 1734 one

Johann Friedrich Bachstrom published his doctoral thesis *Observationes circa Scorbutum* at the University of Leiden, in which he explained that scurvy was caused by a lack of fresh vegetables. Not long after this, in 1753, the Scottish naval surgeon James Lind published *A Treatise on Scurvy*, in which he recommended the consumption of orange and lemon juice. Both these men were right, but arguing from the wrong premises. They thought that the causes of scurvy were the cold wet weather, a depressed state of mind, the salty diet and a lack of exercise. Yet all the experience together with these learned publications failed to help the situation on board. Skimping on costs, the ships carried too few fresh vegetables and oranges. They did take concentrated lemon juice, but this soon loses its vitamin content. Interestingly, the Amsterdam orphan boys who signed up to join the Company were given rocket, a well-intentioned gesture clearly intended to keep them in good health. Thanks to that plant, Dutch whalers sailing to Spitsbergen had managed to survive; but unfortunately, what the orphan boys received was a concentrated syrup of rocket, that is, the plant boiled in brandy whereby the vitamin C was completely destroyed and the medicinal affect reduced to zero. The garlic they were given, however, would certainly not have done any harm.<sup>4</sup> Not until the second half of the eighteenth century when mariners began to take sauerkraut with them on long sea voyages, would scurvy largely be prevented.

As well as these diseases there was also mental suffering. Men unused to life at sea would withdraw into a corner, lose their appetite, not clean themselves after excreting and generally pine away like sick dogs. There are repeated reports in Dutch East India Company travel accounts of people with ‘raging fever’, of patients who became completely delirious and whose language grew obscene and blasphemous, who in blind fury would try to harm themselves or others and in some cases even leap overboard. Such extremes didn’t occur on *The Three Parrots* although they did aboard the *Hagevelt*, where on one occasion a Scottish mariner sprang overboard and drowned.<sup>5</sup>

The ministers tended to explain such cases of mental confusion as a sign of the Devil; the ships' surgeons, on the other hand, considered the four body humours to be out of balance. Arent Blankert listed such excesses under the heading 'fevers'. He distinguished five sorts, all arising from the 'unnatural seething in the blood' which was in turn caused by wrong diet, such as raw fruit, fermenting beer, and fresh stum (partly fermented wine added to fermented wine as a preservative). These things impair the spleen so that the fluid from the spleen's black bile 'gives rise to melancholia and fevers, through its harmful nature.' This leads to an 'unnaturally high temperature' in the brain which results in 'delirious confusion and madness' which may cause the patients to leap overboard 'crying out that they wish to set off for their fatherland'. Blankert cites the case of the ship *Zuiddorp* that spent eight months on the journey from Zeeland in the Netherlands to the Cape of Good Hope in 1712 with 286 on board. He recounts that 114 died on the way from scurvy and raging fever. The ship's surgeon and the two junior surgeons on this fated vessel were seized with despair and in a fit of madness sprang into the sea.<sup>6</sup>

What with all these deplorable sicknesses there was a constant moaning on board, as well as the most terrible stench. Georg could hardly stand it and was amazed that a plague epidemic didn't break out. Air pumps were set in action twice daily in order to provide at least some fresh air. They were tall square cases, with a long wooden tube at one end and a bellows with wooden valves at the other. To start the pump soldiers placed the bellows against the hatches in the stern of the ship, where they fitted exactly; then the valves were shifted backwards and forwards. This did indeed produce fresh air; but the moment the pumping ceased the stuffy oppressive atmosphere returned.

Another hygienic practice was the fortnightly deck-scrubbing when the whole of the between-decks were thoroughly cleaned. First the sailors removed anything and everything – hammocks, chests, bedding, even the sick who were malingering there – and cart it to the upper deck. Then they sluiced the between-

decks with sea water and scattered coarse salt. It was then the task of the cabin boys to scrub away for at least two hours. Water and salt were continually strewn upon the deck during the scrubbing session which, as Georg recalled, lasted until the wood gleamed white as chalk and the heads of the rivets shone as if polished. The wood was rinsed a final time and swabbed dry. Then the edges of the upper deck and the deck itself were sprinkled with vinegar and fumigated with gunpowder.

The sight of so many sick filled Georg with a mixture of pity and revulsion. Throughout the entire journey to Batavia (modern Jakarta) he remained in good health, but was driven almost insane by raging thirst. Although his job was to transport food and drink from the hold, and he was able to acquire some extra water during the first weeks, after a few weeks this no longer worked. He lay limp as a rag he would lie on deck or in his hammock, totally drained of energy. He recalls how he would go from one ‘good friend or fellow countryman’ to another, begging to be given a drop of water ‘for God’s mercy’; but no one gave him any, not even his fellow sailors. Half despairing and ‘half dead’ he lay upon the deck, and had a vision in which he saw a shepherd and a beggar in the countryside, who might have lost all their possessions but at least they still had bread and water with which to refresh their parched exhausted souls. Georg might have lived like them, on land, and not be dying of thirst. He counted himself among the most unlucky on earth and cursed the hour of his birth and his decision, his utter stupidity, to travel to Asia.<sup>7</sup>

One night, remembering that a couple of days previously it had rained, and realising that water might have collected in the longboat, Georg crawled towards it and indeed, found a puddle of rainwater. It was filthy and tasted half of rainwater and half of tar. But desperately thirsty as he was, it tasted sweeter than the best beer or wine, and he felt appreciably refreshed. Georg writes of this lucky find as if it was entirely his own idea and, unlike others, discounting the influence of Divine Providence. However, the idea is not particularly original – there are many travel accounts in which the crew catch water in their shirts or

find a small quantity of water lurking between the folds of oilcloth or in the longboat.

*The Three Parrots* had much to suffer in the mid-Atlantic – not only heat and sickness, but fierce storms too. On 15 December at eleven o'clock in the evening, the ship was surprised by a hurricane. The wind was so wild and unexpected that the topgallant sail (the upper sail on the main mast) was ripped to shreds and at the same time the huge yard (the middle yard on the main mast) split in two. Georg, who was considered strong, was ordered with three others to climb the main mast and tie down the torn topgallant sail. He writes how terrified he felt: 'God knows how my courage sank to my boots when I was given the order. I dared not refuse, I just had to obey. I was trembling in every limb as I climbed up the mast, it was far worse than that day by Pampus near Amsterdam, the first time I had to climb up the main mast. Now,' he confessed, 'I turned out to be a very frightened sailor.' But with the three others he managed to fasten down the torn sail without too much difficulty – although, until years later when he wrote the account, he couldn't remember how he got down again. He soon recovered, but no one who hasn't experienced something similar, he was to write, would believe how immensely fierce is the force of the wind. The yard for the topgallant sail, wrote Georg, is as thick as a *Rahneholz*, that is, a tree trunk split in two by wind or frost, and there are a large number of ropes to hold the sail to the yard. But the force of the wind is indeed unbelievably strong. The yard for the topgallant is a spar fifteen metres long and its diameter at the centre (the thickest part) is about one metre; yet in a hurricane it can snap in a moment.

Such an experience of the power of the elements must have been terrifying indeed. Veteran sailors were used to all kinds of things – climbing up and down the standing rigging that held the masts upright, fastened like rope ladders on either side of them, is relatively simple. But in order to do anything on the yards or with the sails, they had to stand balanced on the ropes running parallel beneath the yards, holding fast with one hand, and carrying out the work with the other. If

it was dark and a storm was raging, they were hardly able to see each other or hear each other's cries in a turbulent tossing sea, the situation was perilous in the extreme.

Next day the storm had abated and there was a favourable wind. A new yard was hoisted to replace the broken one and a new sail shaken out beneath it.

### *Leisure time and relaxation*

Two days after the tempest *The Three Parrots* reached the equator. The sea grew 'smooth as a table top' and it grew hotter. This point in the journey could be a time of great suffering. The ship was becalmed, the heat intense, on every side lay thirsting and dying men; on the other hand, there was the opportunity to relax. Celebrations of too riotous a nature were forbidden and in those days crossing the equator didn't involve any dressing-up party with a bearded Neptune holding a trident and 'baptising' all on board; nevertheless it was always a day of jollification. The Dutch East India Company expressly forbade the 'baptising' ceremony but this was quietly ignored; so on 18 December the baptism took place. During the night the second mate, Georg Honsdorp, arranged everything for a day of festivities. As soon as breakfast was over, the sailors fetched the large hosepipe and showered the entire boat including the two longboats. Then came the turn of all on board. First the ship's officers, who put up no resistance, then the petty officers, then the ordinary folk. Everyone, Georg recounts, was soaked to the skin, even the skipper Verdoes joined in, although he was an old man.

In fact this tradition was meant for everyone crossing the line for the first time. Only the minister Boppius, the junior merchant Johan Gilbert with his wife and maidservant, and the commandant of the soldiers, Sergeant Jan van der Meen, tried to dodge out of it and hide in the cabin. It proved impossible to get them out, even with force. But the old seadogs had a trick up their sleeves. Bastiaan

Verdoes, the captain, arranged for two large wooden barrels full of water to be hoisted into each of the main-tops (the wooden platforms around the top of the lower masts). Towards the end of the morning, when the baptism ceremony was over and quiet was restored, he ordered four men to climb up to the yards. At eleven-thirty it was customary to sound the call for lunch (which would summon the people who were hiding). So, as usual, they came out and looked round cautiously in case anyone was waiting to spray them. Honsdorp, a kindly man, accompanied them to the quarterdeck, telling them some amusing anecdotes, and to under the mainsail, where he paused to indicate a point far out to sea where they should take a careful look. Hardly had these words left his lips than a signal was heard and the two barrels of water were tipped over the heads of the small group. They were soaked amid a great roar of laughter. That closed the ‘comedy of baptism’, but did not end the ritual. There was more merrymaking to come. Verdoes ordered four pigs to be slaughtered for soup, and from two large barrels he gave everyone a double portion of *pons*, a punch made from wine, brandy, water and sugar. The rest of the day was filled with music and jollity and culminated with twelve soldiers staging an entertaining comedy in the evening.

Naturally, such pleasant crossing the line ceremonies could only take place when circumstances permitted. Sometimes ships were becalmed for weeks on end at the equator. Then heat, thirst, exhaustion and the many sick turned the boat into a living hell and there was not the slightest cause for merriment. Although *The Three Parrots* was becalmed and the sun beat down mercilessly this only lasted for eight days and it rained every day so that everyone had as much water as they wanted. There were also heavy thunderstorms during those days.

As well as crossing the line other moments on the voyage encouraged general relaxation, especially when some danger had been passed. Also there would be an edifying sermon on Christian festivals. On the *De Jonge Lieve* on Christmas Eve in 1774 several sailors presented a homemade Christmas Star to the officers in the cabin. They had been most inventive in making this, and woven the names of the

captain, junior merchant and first mate into it, as well as illustrating such allegorical figures as Fortune, Justice and Cupid. They presented it and sang a lively song, whereupon they received a small gift.<sup>8</sup> Sometimes sailors came to pay their respects to the captain on his birthday, delivering a handsome and, above all, courteous speech. This too would be rewarded with a few pence or a round of brandy.

What with working, eating and sleeping the crew had little free time and in the few spare hours that were left they had practical jobs to do, such as washing and mending their clothes; needle and thread and Spanish soap are always listed in the inventory of their possessions. A major problem was drying the wash. This was impossible when it was raining and when it was sunny, any wet washing hanging in the rigging restricted the sailors' view, so orders were given to spread it on deck.

The sailors must have had many tales to tell at such times. They would recount the story of their lives, dishing up richly imaginative adventures; there would be gossip too, as well as serious discussions about natural phenomena that the men observed during the voyage and which they couldn't properly explain. These included St. Elmo's fire (a glow accompanying the brushlike discharge of atmospheric electricity usually appearing as a tip of light on the masts of ships during stormy weather), thunder and lightning, marine phosphorescence, mirages, shooting stars, comets and occasionally an eclipse of the sun. There were also strange sounds at sea, as of moaning voices; these were probably the calls of whales and dolphins.

On one occasion Georg saw the St. Elmo's fire, a frequently-observed phenomenon. More experienced sailors have remarkably little to say about it, except that it heralds the end of a storm. Georg's account contains not a single reference to superstitious tales or supernatural portents. Either he didn't believe in them, or speculations of this kind rarely arose. Adam Westerman addresses this topic in the seventeenth-century *Groote Christelycke Zeevaert* (The Great Book of Christian Seamanship). He warns against stories of the supernatural, tales

about what befell ‘mariners and travellers in foreign taverns, forests, on the road, in strange uninhabited islands, aboard ship.’ He refers to ‘rumblings’ in the ship, to the fiery points and sheet lightning at the tip of the mast, on the bowsprit or out at sea, to all the noises heard, both nearby and far off, like nails being hammered in, coughing, moaning and lamenting, about which ‘the most curious and wondrous explanations and stories are concocted.’<sup>9</sup> Westerman gives an explanation for this. Either some people simply lose their wits, or there is trickery which deceives simple folk. For that matter, Westerman assures his reader that spirits really do exist, as proved in the Bible and daily experience. He writes of ‘spirits, appearances, ghosts, white women, dolphins, wee folk and suchlike unnatural freaks’. God will protect humans against such creatures. But not one report from the Dutch East India Company mentions belief in the supernatural. The sea dog saw the world in practical terms. Seafaring was too hazardous an occupation to rely on speculation and fantasy.<sup>10</sup>

Other leisure activities included playing cards and dice and board games. However, the first two were forbidden, and anyone caught on board with dice or cards was promptly put on an eight-day diet of bread and water. Anyone caught playing was fined about 20 pence. Music was a common form of entertainment and the sailors made up their own songs. It is clear from accounts of other journeys, from the inventories of passengers who died, and from finds in wrecks, that musical instruments were often found on board: a violin, recorder or flute, even a transverse flute or an oboe are listed. The trumpeter, who held a professional post on board, owned his instrument. At this time accordions were not yet around and probably to a modern ear the music would have sounded somewhat monotonous and unmelodious.

There are regular references to plays being performed on board when the ship was becalmed and little work could be done. Some of the plays mentioned have serious (biblical) titles, such as *Holofernes* or *The Prodigal Son* but we may assume the performances contained plenty of knockabout humour, usually described as ‘buffoonery’ and ‘comedy’. There were also cases of deliriously

wild dancing. On a ship that set off a year before *The Three Parrots* we read that there was singing, dancing, music-making and a performance of the comedy *Hansworst* [something like *Dick Turnip*]; apparently the man acting the doctor cut such an extraordinary caper that he shot overboard and was drowned.<sup>11</sup> Also, though not public entertainment, there was considerable horsing about, innocent wrestling and romping that could develop into sexual intimacy between men.

The sailors had their own curious games – ‘miller’s game’, ‘smith’s game’, ‘horse-thief game’, ‘organ game’, ‘execution game’, ‘storming the castle’<sup>12</sup> – in which they picked on an inexperienced soldier or sailor. Popular among these would be ones in which, as the absolute peak of hilarity, the victim’s head, bottom or genitals were smeared with human excrement, or at the very least with tar.

Smoking provided a sure form of relaxation for every soldier and sailor. Even the poorest among them was bound to have a set of pipes and a quantity of tobacco in his gear. The mariner is addicted to tobacco ‘like a suckling child to the breast’, wrote Godfried Udemans, a preacher from the Dutch port of Zierikzee, as early as the seventeenth century in his edifying book *’t Geestelyck roer van ’t Coopmans Schip* (The spiritual tiller of the merchant vessel).<sup>13</sup> Georg reported that he had bought twelve dozen pipes and twenty kilos of tobacco in Amsterdam. There were strict rules on board for this too: you were only allowed to smoke during the daytime and only on deck, before the main mast.

Little time was spent reading. Some of the crew would have been illiterate, but could still have been read to. The man who read the most was the minister, Simon Boppius, who had a great many books in his cabin. The captain and the mates had books on navigation. Generally speaking, the ordinary soldiers and sailors would have brought very little reading matter aboard. Sometimes a person’s estate sheds a little light on this. If a seaman left any books they were generally religious, such as the New Testament, sometimes the whole Bible, or hymn books, collections of the Psalms, or such tomes as the *Groote Christelycke Zeevaert* (Great Book of Christian Seamanship) or *De Godvreezende Zeeman* (The Godfearing Seaman).

Men from the German states were generally Lutheran and brought their own religious reading matter. At his death in 1758 a soldier aboard the *Schagen* left 'several books in High German' which together fetched 17 guilders 10 stivers.<sup>14</sup> On the *Oosterbeek* which set sail in 1761, a corporal who died left both a Bible and a Lutheran hymn book in German.<sup>15</sup> Occasionally someone owned a copy of some popular anti-Spanish polemic dating to the time of the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish monarchy, such as the *Spaansche Tirannye* (Spanish Tyranny). We know that Georg had books in his ship's chest, but apart from the Bible, we don't know the titles. People read for relaxation or for reasons of piety; and there was a third reason. By reading a book in Dutch, foreigners could practise the language, thereby improving their chances of promotion once they arrived in the Dutch East Indies.<sup>16</sup>

Those who could write jotted down notes as the journey proceeded; later these could be worked up into a full account of the voyage. The Dutch East India Company, always nervous of trading secrets falling into the wrong hands, was not too keen on all this writing. Indeed, Georg – who had come equipped with paper, pen and ink – described how he had to make notes about the journey in secret. An earlier voyager on a Company ship had already made this point. Anyone who wants to keep a ship's journal must do so furtively, because the ship's officers don't like it. If you're really keen on doing it, he advised, become pals with one of the petty officers and then, provided they keep a journal, borrow theirs from time to time and copy it.<sup>17</sup>

Presumably men would have tried to read and write with a modicum of privacy, such as in their hammock or seated under it on their sea chest, the only small area of private territory that belonged to them on board. There are a few records of a sailor bringing a bird on board for company; a corporal who died on the *Schagen* left 'a bird in its cage' which was sold for 1 guilder 4 stivers. The small creature was evidently considered less valuable than the two canaries which the ship's second surgeon had brought along. He had clearly insured himself against boredom, because he also had fourteen books with him. At the auction

after his death the first mate bought the two birds for the handsome sum of 13 guilders 10 stivers. Two sacks of mixed birdseed were thrown in for good measure.<sup>18</sup>

Fishing offered a different kind of leisure activity. Very little exertion was demanded for one type – the flying fish. Whole schools of them zoomed right across the ship, landing on deck where they lay panting and squirming until the sailors clubbed them to death. They were very tasty fried. Georg recounted the old story that these fish could fly as long as their wings, or fins, were wet. As soon as they dried off, the creatures fell into the water and became an easy prey for other fish.

Fishing hooks and lines were frequently cast out as a welcome break from the monotony of work on board, and also for food. It was very satisfying to catch fish. Apart from flying fish, five other sorts are always mentioned, not just by Georg. There was dorado, albacore, and bonito which had already been described by Dutch writers for some time.<sup>19</sup> Dorado, a golden mackerel (*Coryphaena hippurus*), is considered ‘the finest and most delicate of fish’. Its liver when dried and ground to powder was said to be an excellent remedy for dysentery. Albacore (*Thymnus alalonga*), like bonito (*Thymnus pelamys*), is a type of tuna. According to Georg albacore is very tasty, but the meat is dry and if eaten in excess leads to a burning in the stomach and constipation. In contrast, dolphin meat is oily, tastes better and is easily digestible. Georg describes it as being ‘flat as a bream’ and with beautiful colouring.

The sailors fished from the bows. They fastened hooks onto long lines,<sup>20</sup> and tied a white rag at a short distance from the hook; two bird’s feathers were attached to the rag in a cross-shape so that it looked more or less like a flying fish. As soon as fish were spotted a couple of sailors climbed onto the bowsprit, the ‘blind yard’, and wiggled the line back and forth. The hook was weighted with lead so that it remained below water. The moment a fish saw what it took to be a flying fish, it launched an attack. The sailors allowed the fish to chase for a

while until it was hooked by biting the 'flying fish' when it was pulled onto the fo'c'sle.

Catching shark was the most spectacular. This is often described, also by Georg. On the way to the Cape of Good Hope they caught a total of four. Sharks often swim close to ships, reports Georg, especially when there are many sick on board, but whether they could smell this he wasn't sure. What he did know was that whenever a corpse was thrown overboard, sharks immediately fell upon it and swiftly tore to shreds both the body and the canvas in which it was wrapped. He describes the shark as a beast of prey measuring fifteen feet long with a large, conical shaped thick head. Its eyes and mouth were lower than its upper jaw and it had to turn on its side when it wanted to sink its teeth into something to stop its upper jaw getting in the way. They had three rows of terrifyingly sharp teeth that fitted over each other. Once they had bitten into something it was difficult for them to let go. Sharks were accompanied by pilot fish (the horse mackerel, *Naucrates ductor*). I myself saw, writes Georg, that each shark has four or five of these fish around it. One swims right in front of its snout, one swims alongside, and two or three follow on its back, leading it to its prey.

Catching a shark went as follows: a sizeable piece of pork fat was used for bait, tied onto a hook which in turn was fastened to a long rope. A piece of wood was fixed to the rope a couple of yards from the hook, to prevent it from sinking and so that you could see where it was. This was thrown into the water. As soon as the shark's pilot fish saw it, they led it towards it. However, the shark was cautious, swimming around a good thirty times, waiting at least three hours, until at last, it rushed up to the bait and grab it. Once the shark had the bait fast it would try to swim off with its prey, but the men on board would pull the shark back to the rope ladder hanging over the ship's side. So long as the shark remained in the sea all was quiet, but the minute the men began to pull the rope and the shark's head emerged from the water, a furious struggle began. Then an experienced sailor climbed down the rope ladder and threw a thick rope over the shark's head to tie him fast. The shark was left hanging for a while until it grew

exhausted from beating about. Then it was hoisted onto the deck and a frantic tussle began, the shark's tail thrashing fiercely. Everyone on deck had to watch out that they weren't hit; one thrash of a shark's tail can break a man's leg. The men used two iron crowbars to kill the shark, battering its head until it finally lay still. Then everyone took their knives and cut off a hunk of flesh.

Georg claimed that shark was delicious, although he never ate it himself. He described how to cook it: first cut it into small pieces, then place it in a tub and cover it with water. Then a sailor with clean feet tramples the meat, regularly pouring fresh water over it until there's no more froth. Then the meat's ready to be cooked with a large quantity of salt. Georg didn't understand why it produced so much froth. When the shark was cooked it was dressed with olive oil and vinegar.

This wasn't the end of the shark's story. All sorts of useful products were obtained from the fish. The fins were cut off and used by the carpenters for filing wood. The shark's head was cut open. Large as it was, it didn't contain much marrow. The ship's officers removed the brains and preserved them. It must have been a remarkable medicine, but Georg didn't know what it was used for. Some accounts say that it was to ease the pains of childbirth. The liver and lungs produced 'good oil'. There were often baby sharks inside an adult – Georg sometimes counted six of them. There were countless stories of an arm or leg being found inside a shark, belonging to some dead passenger recently thrown overboard.

Although Georg doesn't record this, other parts of the shark would also have been put to good use. The teeth served as souvenirs, the heart and liver as medicine against dysentery and night blindness. The skin would be prepared and used for the lining of a ship's chest, even to bind books. The vertebrae might be used as pieces in a board game. Another story that Georg fails to mention is a variation on the shark theme. The sailors were fascinated by the creatures and on many occasions instead of battering the shark to death, once they had it on board they mutilated it by cutting off its tail and fins or putting out its eyes. Then amid

great hilarity they threw it overboard attached to a piece of wood or an empty barrel. The blind helpless creature was then attacked by others of its kind, torn to bits and devoured, while the sailors looked on in huge amusement.

### *Death*

*The Three Parrots* was becalmed until Christmas but was then able to sail on in a southwesterly direction. Between leaving São Tiago at the end of November to the end of the year, five soldiers had died on board. More deaths were to come. On 6 January 1753 the soldier Johann Friedrich Schulz from Tilsit, died. Georg had known him well because, like him, he had worked in Koningsbergen as apprentice on an ironmongery stall. Georg was deeply affected by his friend's death. Schulz's body was lowered overboard with fitting respect, no doubt to be consumed by sharks the very same day. After the funeral, Schulz's ship's chest was opened and his scant possessions auctioned. Soldier Johann Gottlieb Parijn purchased a pouch of tobacco for 3 guilders 5 stivers while the cabin boy Jan Burgers acquired five 'half shirts' and two pair of 'loose sleeves' for 1 guilder 13 stivers, and first sailmaker Jan Bosman acquired a pair of shoes and a pair of slippers for 4 guilders 5 stivers. Sailor Arnt Thoolen bought the most: three books, five shirts, a baize shirt and a drinking bowl, which amounted to 12 guilders in total. Schulz's 'estate' brought in the sum of 21 guilders 3 stivers. A week later, soldier Friedrich Lebens from Hamburg died. His possessions were also auctioned. Two shirts, four pairs of loose sleeves (with stripes), a woollen undershirt and a few other small items went for 6 guilders 17 stivers; a roll of tobacco for 3 guilders 5 stivers.

The route from the Cape Verde Islands to the equator went southwards but after that the course was southwesterly, making use of the northeast trade wind. Following this course the ships approached the east coast of Brazil via a series of

shallows known as the Abrolhos. Arriving here, it was once more time for celebrations. A service of thanksgiving was held and doubtless the following words would have been heard, that minister Simon Boppius had found in *The Godfearing Seaman*: ‘Almighty and merciful God our Father, we thank thee and praise thee with all our hearts for thy gracious and manifold benefits ... that thou hast spared us and our ships in thy loving kindness unto this day ... .We pray thee, O merciful Father, that thou wilt in the days to come graciously preserve us and our ships from all danger and destruction...’<sup>21</sup> When the sermon as over, the crew were invited to a meal of pork, soup and punch. In the afternoon there were again all kind of entertainments.

On leaving the Abrolhos they altered course once more and sailed in a southeasterly direction. Although the weather was fair, the wind had turned against them. There were now so many sick men aboard that no one knew where to put them. The ship’s doctor and his assistants were run off their feet trying to deal with all the ailing sailors. At night the doctor’s assistants kept watch in turn, and a couple of older soldiers and sailors were singled out for the task of ‘father’ or ‘carer’. Their job was to help feed the sick, giving water and medicine when needed. This sounds finer than in fact it was, for some of these ‘respectable persons’ as Georg cynically called them, were completely without conscience.<sup>22</sup> When they should have been bringing some form of refreshment to the sick, they kept it for themselves. Worst of all, they opened the chests belonging to the sick men and stole anything they found. So a sick man recovered only to find that he’d been robbed of all his possessions: clothes, money and tobacco. One state of misery exchanged for another.

During those weeks on *The Three Parrots* the atmosphere grew desperate, partly due to the growing shortage of food. Peas and white beans, the tastiest part of the meals, were all used up and the chief staple was now groats but this had turned stale and dusty in the heat. Nevertheless, it was all the men got, twice a day, mixed with old olive oil that had turned rancid. By now there were so many weevils in the bread it was impossible to take a bite without crunching on a few

of them. During these days Georg often thought back to Koningsbergen. The very worst food there that he had not wanted to eat, would have tasted like ambrosia here on board. Even if he could only have had fresh, coarse bread, he would have been content. Indeed, he writes, anyone who refuses bad food and complains that his stomach is weak should take a little trip to the Far East. He'll soon learn what hunger is, and stop complaining.

On 20 January came a tense interruption to the monotonous life on board when the ship's lookout spied another ship about four miles away. The officers thought it was one of the other Company ships and hoisted a flag; but she didn't approach and disappeared from view. Next morning at dawn the lookout saw the ship again, this time three miles behind *The Three Parrots*. Again a flag was hoisted; the unknown ship, not heavily laden and sailing easily, approached swiftly and overtook them in about an hour and a half. Since she was not flying an ensign and didn't make herself known, Captain Verdoes ordered all hands on deck with the command '*Overal*'. The able seamen took up position beside the guns; the soldiers were handed out muskets and took their stations on the fo'c'sle. The sailors who had been trained to do so climbed onto the yards, complete with grenade and burning fuse. Constable Maarten Baas had the cannons loaded as quickly as possible.

The unknown ship sailed round *The Three Parrots* three times but still she didn't hoist an ensign. Verdoes ordered a warning shot to be fired. Then the other hoisted a French flag and sailed a little closer. They asked where the Dutch ship was from and where it was bound for, and said that they had sailed from Martinique. The mates exchanged information about which latitude and longitude they were on. Whilst thus engaged in conversation, a crowd of women appeared on the quarterdeck, so many that they outnumbered the men. They began to giggle excessively, but, said Georg, he couldn't see what there was to laugh about. Then the captain quickly trimmed the sails and the ship moved off. Three hours later she had disappeared from view.

Those on board *The Three Parrots* decided the other boat must have been a French *filibustier* or pirate ship. This was highly probable; in those days Martinique was the major base of operations for French pirates. However, women were rarely found on pirate ships. Very few pirates were married and there are only a few known cases of women who were active pirates.<sup>23</sup> Probably what Georg saw was a pirate ship with a number of women on board who had been taken from a captured ship. Generally speaking, these women would have been treated courteously.

### *Punishments*

Georg found himself among a group of men whose life was tough and cruel and based on violence and intimidation. Such closed groups are often compared with societies inside prison. Men unused to such a life could only survive by forming some kind of comradeship, by being continually on their guard and by trusting those in command. But things often went wrong; there was drunkenness, fighting, robbery and sexual violence. It is striking how often mention is made of forced sodomy in accounts of voyages of this kind and in the criminal archives in the Netherlands, the Cape of Good Hope and Batavia, and this is only the cases that came to light and upon which sentence was pronounced. Such things also occurred aboard *The Three Parrots*, as reported by Georg on a few occasions. Even more frequent were brawls and slanging-matches. Towards the end of January there was trouble again, Georg relates. One of the able seamen, the Irishman Andrew Walling, and a soldier, were convicted, the first for drunkenness and rowdy behaviour, the second for stabbing another soldier with a knife when under the influence. The rules drawn up by the Company in their Articles could not prevent fighting and drunkenness, any more than could the watchful eye of the quartermaster or the repeated exhortations of the preacher.

The men were sentenced to be handcuffed and riveted by the legs in the open air on the quarterdeck. They had already been on a diet of bread and water for six weeks; after that came their first hearing, before the three highest-ranking petty officers. The junior merchant Johan Gilbert, acting as secretary, took notes. One week later the offenders had a second hearing, this time before the Council of Ship's Officers, which was also duly noted down. Then the three most senior sailors were summoned and heard the whole matter again. After that Gilbert set the charge and read it out to the Council and the sailors. They were asked whether they considered the offenders merited the proposed punishment. They gave their reply. Then the boatswain took up the role of prosecuting counsel and pronounced the full verdict which was generally less severe than the charge. He also appointed the day when the sentence was to be carried out. Both offenders were then ordered to be 'beaten upon the buttocks'.

Georg provides a detailed description of the beating. The sentence was carried out near the large capstan. Several green cloth cushions were placed over the quarterdeck balustrade. The complete Council of Ship's Officers assembled and each man took up position leaning against the cushions. The officers wore full dress uniform complete with sabre. Then the sergeant was summoned; he released Andrew Walling, placing him in small handcuffs and leg-irons, and led him from the quarterdeck down to the ship's waist. At the same time the red flag known as the 'blood flag' was fixed to the base of the flagstaff to show that justice was being performed. Then the sentence was read out, a cannon shot was fired, and the red flag was hoisted to the top of the flagstaff. Walling was led towards the capstan. This has two windlass beams sticking out from it; Georg describes it as resembling a woman with her arms stretched out towards her lover. A thick mat had been tied around the capstan and the condemned man was tied down with his stomach facing it. His arms were fastened to two of the windlass beams and his upper trunk and feet were bound to the capstan. The sergeant had laid ready two ropes measuring about an ell (approximately 45 inches) long and as thick as an arm. Now the captain approached, removed his hat, took one of the

ropes and gave the man two lashes across his bottom. Then he threw down the rope, replaced his hat, unsheathed his sabre and remained standing until the completion of the punishment. He was followed by the mates and the other officers, then the sailors and finally the soldiers. Everyone had to give three lashes. If the man passed out the punishment was temporarily discontinued while the ship's doctor moped him up; when he came to, the flogging resumed. If the man died it was bad luck and no one was held responsible.

The soldier on *The Three Parrots* in this case received a further punishment. The custom was for men found guilty of stabbing another to be pinned to the main mast with a knife. Georg describes the subtle method by which this was done, thereby contradicting the many bloodthirsty accounts of this custom. It was, he says, a very skilful operation so that it seemed to be a symbolic punishment. The sergeant took a small sharp pointed knife and stuck it through the skin between the middle- and the ring-finger, then hammered the knife into the main mast. The severity of the pain caused depended on the character of the sergeant. The offender was allowed to pull his hand down and thus free himself, albeit with a sizeable wound. The cut was immediately bandaged and often healed within three days. This type of punishment was both necessary and useful, according to Georg. If it didn't exist, no one could be sure his life was safe and all hell would be let loose.

The condemned soldier was probably Hendrik Smit Pieterszoon from Amsterdam, who was demoted on that day from soldier to the lowest rank of ship's boy. In his place Jan Russeveld of Alkmaar was promoted from ship's boy to soldier. Yet another change of rank is recorded: soldier Pieter Coenraad of Gorkum was demoted to sailor, whereby his wage fell from 9 to 8 guilders. In his place the young Jan van der Laan was promoted to soldier, thereby earning one guilder more per month. Andrew Walling was later to disgrace himself again with brawling and drunkenness; Jan van der Laan was to desert the Company in Batavia and when captured turned himself in on the grounds of sodomy.

The punishments on 4 February caused quite a commotion on board; after that had died down the ship altered course once more, now sailing eastwards, taking advantage both of a west wind and a westerly flowing current. Their fellow ships, the *Wimmemum* and the *Vlietlust* were now out of sight and *The Three Parrots* sailed on alone. The numbers of sick fell, for various reasons. They were now sailing well south of the equator in cooler regions. Furthermore, Captain Verdoes was being more generous with the food supply and the men got larger helpings and refreshments more often. In addition, the sailors were now catching large numbers of fish, often as many as thirty a day.

But although the men were generally in better health and the weather was pleasant, everyone longed for land, not because they were fed up with the long sea voyage but because they so badly wanted a change from the monotonous, bad diet; it had a devastating effect on the men, especially the sailors, who, according to Georg, would far rather be at sea – provided the food was good – than on land. After all, sometimes sailors enjoyed very easy days at sea, while when they were in the roads they were exhausted loading and unloading the ships.

The longing to be on land grew keener when the command came to keep a sharp lookout for the coast of Africa. The mates had calculated that it couldn't be far off. The first person to see the coast could count on a reward. Alas, the mates had taken their fix based on reckonings that were often way off the mark. It was possible to calculate the latitude and the height of the sun using a quadrant or sextant, but not the distance travelled or the longitude. Besides the reckoning based on the ship's speed, course and position, there were other indications in the southern Atlantic that they were getting close to the Cape. Vast islands formed of a long kind of seaweed known as 'trumpets' (*Ecklonia buccinalis Agardh*) floated in a huge belt stretching across the Atlantic from Patagonia to the Cape of Good Hope. This seaweed had been a sure signal that ships were nearing the Cape of Good Hope from the days when the Portuguese began making frequent voyages in these waters. It is a rule, relates Georg, that the trumpet seaweed tells sailors they are little more than eighteen miles off the coast. This was a little inaccurate

as the seaweed could be found over hundreds of kilometres. Other natural phenomena in these waters were the whales and the seals while around the masts circled seabirds such as the ‘black sea raven’ or fulmar, ‘Cape pigeons’ and, most impressive of all, the ‘velvet seagull’ or mighty albatross, a kingly bird with a wing-span of three metres.

Time and again the men thought they had sighted land, or even an entire town. They were sure they had spotted Table Mountain and Lion Mountain on the Cape, but on each occasion it turned out to be cloud formations. The mates were three weeks too early in declaring that any moment now they would see the Cape. Their reckoning was inaccurate; the ship was far further west than they calculated. This was the second time the mates had made a grave error in their reckoning; they had previously set the wrong course early on causing the boat almost to founder off the coast of Flanders. Another incident was probably also connected. Again a quarrel had broken out between Captain Verdoes and one of the officers, with the second mate Josua Hartman drunkenly calling the captain names and even trying to strike him, whereupon he was arrested by the sergeant. Thanks to the mediation of the other officers, Hartman was released after a few days.

Meanwhile, no land appeared and the mariners could only try to be patient and peer out expectantly over the unending waters. On 25 March, after three weeks of gazing vainly into the distance, sailor Mattheus Willefries caught sight of land and was given a reward of 6 guilders.<sup>24</sup> That night the crew saw the glow on Robben Island and with a good following wind the ship sped toward the roads off the Cape of Good Hope. But the wind changed direction and although they had almost reached the roads it proved impossible to drop anchor – also because there was another ship blocking their course. *The Three Parrots* had to give way and sail to Robben Island.

The Company had occupied the island as early as the mid-seventeenth century, putting out sheep to graze and planting a vegetable garden to supply fresh provisions for ships that were unable to cast anchor in Table Bay. In the days of

the Dutch East India Company it was also already being used as a prison. Georg went ashore and provides a detailed description of the island. He saw the commandant's dwelling and several dingy buildings where the prisoners lived. The battery with its three cannons was not for defence purposes but to fire shots whenever a ship was sighted. The island was bare, without trees or its own source of natural water. There was a garden and bedraggled cattle grazing here and there. Water was transported from the mainland. The garrison consisted of the commandant, a sergeant and twelve soldiers. The prisoners, who were all flogged and branded, had the task of hacking flagstones out of stone, searching for shells and burning them to make chalk. They earned no more than two months' pay per year, the rest being pocketed by the prosecuting counsel of the Cape of Good Hope. Other prisoners on the island included Chinese and men who had been convicted in Batavia. Some were sitting out life sentences.

Although Robben Island lies only two miles from the so-called Hottentot coast, it was impossible to escape from. Boats were not allowed to remain moored there at night. As a rule food and water were brought by boat from the mainland on Saturdays. They transported supplies for four weeks because it was quite often impossible to anchor due to a strong wind and they would be forced to return to the Cape, their journey made in vain.

Once *The Three Parrots* came within a cannon shot's distance from the shore, she cast anchor and the topmast and yards were lowered. The sloop was launched to go in search of fresh provisions and returned after a couple of hours laden with seven sheep, albeit somewhat on the skinny side; this didn't stop them from being immediately slaughtered. The meat was cooked on coal that had also just been acquired. More sheep followed the next day. All aboard were overjoyed at this fresh food because, explains Georg, they hadn't tasted mutton since leaving Amsterdam.

On the afternoon of 8 March the crew witnessed an impressive sight: the East Indies fleet, eight heavily-laden vessels, on its voyage home to Holland. This was an opportunity to send home messages, signs of life for the landlubbers. The

private postal traffic between Batavia and Cape Town and the Netherlands was a constant headache for the governors of the Company who were nervous of information about the Company falling into the wrong hands. All private post had to be centrally collected and checked. This rule, however, often went by the board. We learn that Georg also managed to send letters with the returning fleet. He wrote to Claas van den Bergh in Amsterdam and enclosed two other letters in the envelope that he wanted forwarded to Koningsbergen. He wrote to each of his two close friends there, Martin Kowalewski and Gottfried Cholewius, and learned much later that his letters had arrived safely.

In the afternoon the wind swung round to the northeast and immediately the command was given to hoist the topmasts and the yards; this was ready in about an hour. The ship set sail for the roadstead but once more they were soon in difficulties when the wind dropped. The ship couldn't move forward – indeed it began to move away from the shore. In Cape Town they had been informed of *The Three Parrots*' approach and it was clear the ship was in trouble and couldn't get to the roads. The command was given to all longboats from Dutch ships to row out and tow in *The Three Parrots*. The oarsmen did their utmost to get the job done as quickly as possible, so that they could then return to their own ship or go ashore. Finally, at four in the afternoon, *The Three Parrots* was able to cast anchor.

*Notes to Chapter 13*

- 1 Letter from J.C.W. Rademacher sent from Batavia (Jakarta) on 15 October 1767, *Archief Hope*, no. 99).
- 2 Leuftink, pp. 119-21.
- 3 L-B, f. 301.
- 4 Vogel also mentions garlic as an approved medicinal food (Vogel, *Vorbericht*).
- 5 VOC 6298.
- 6 The *Zuiddorp* was wrecked off the west coast of Australia (*Das I*, p. 312). Such instances were evidently not restricted to the lower personnel, as is evidenced by the case of the ship's captain of the *Heer Arendskerke*, who sprang overboard in 1742 in the Indian Ocean (Bruijn 2001, p. 8).
- 7 L-B, f. 304-05.
- 8 GA, Groningen, *Familiearchief Quintus*, no. 125, f. 26 and 27.
- 9 Westerman, p. 411.
- 10 See Van Gelder 1999.
- 11 Wolf, p. 37.
- 12 Tappe, p. 230, Trevennot, f. 26, De Hullu, pp. 128-30.
- 13 Cited by Groenendijk, p. 136.
- 14 VOC 14466.
- 15 VOC 6411. See also Bonke 1999, p. 102.
- 16 Trevennot, f. 31.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 VOC 14466.
- 19 De Marees, pp. 160-64.
- 20 Georg gives a length of sixty *klaster*; a *klaster* is estimated at 1.75 metres; it would thus measure about 105 metres.
- 21 Van Leeuwaarden, pp. 886-87.
- 22 L-B, f. 317.
- 23 The most famous examples are the Englishwomen Anne Bonny and Mary Read. The first was the partner of the notorious pirate Calico Jack. Both women, who in fighting spirit and verbal violence were in every way a match for the men, were captured in 1720 on Jamaica and sentenced to death by hanging for their piratical activities. But when to the surprise of all they announced they were pregnant, they were reprieved. Apart from the occasional instance of a pirate who took his wife or partner with him, and the cases of Bonny and Read, almost no women are recorded aboard pirate ships (Cordingly, p. 73 ff.).
- 24 VOC 6295; in 1736 the sum of six *rijksdaalders* was paid (Barend-van Haeften, p. 89); according to Georg a reward of 25 guilders was promised.