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A JAPANESE PRINT OF A DUTCH EAST INDIAMAN

J. F. L. De Balbian Verster

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A JAPANESE PRINT OF A DUTCH EAST INDIAMAN.

By J. F. L. DE BALBIAN VERSTER.

THE print from which the accompanying photograph was made is probably unique. It was formerly in the possession of Rear-Admiral Sir M. W. Van Rensselaer Bowier, who died at Amsterdam in 1891. When he was in Japan in 1881, in command of the *Koningin Emma*, he was ordered by King William III. to hand to the Mikado the Grand Cross of the Order of the Netherlands Lion. There were festivities at Tokio in honour of the King's special envoy. He received a very high Japanese decoration and was the guest of a Prince of the Imperial house. As a souvenir of the old relations between Japan and Holland his host

gave him this curious print. It was hanging on the wall with two rollers, like a kakemono. After the death of its recipient the print passed to his son, and he lent it to the Historical Section of our Shipping Exhibition at Amsterdam last year.

I have been lucky enough to collect some information about the print, and to identify the ship represented. First of all I am indebted to Mr. John F. Baddeley, the author of a splendid illustrated work entitled, "Russia-Mongolia-China, 1224-1676." Mr. Baddeley took much interest in this print, but on my assuring him that the ship certainly belonged to the eighteenth century, not to an earlier period, he kindly handed over to me the translation of the inscription. This was made at the Japanese Embassy in London and runs as follows:—

On the right.—"The picture of a Dutch ship. Length of the ship, about 14 *jo*; width, 3 *jo* 8 *shaku*; height, 3 *jo* 5 *shaku*; height of mast, about 14 *jo*; flag-post, about 3 *jo*; number of sails, 18; guns, 36; funnel, about 3 *jo*; crew, about 100."*

On the left.—"Distance from Japan by sea—Formosa, 640 *ri*; Madagascar, 5,100 *ri*; Luzon, 800 *ri*; England, 11,700 *ri*; Cambodia, 1,800 *ri*; Portugal, 12,000 *ri*; Sumatra, 2,400 *ri*; Holland, 13,000 *ri*; Shakatara (Socotra ?), 3,400 *ri*.†

The inscription is in the Japanese language, written with Chinese characters. At the top are three characters accompanied by their Dutch equivalents—"Sun, Moon, Stars." The reason for these words is not clear.

On the stern is the broken word "SCHL LAAR" and on a flag beside the fore topsail, in two lines, "M.U. YDER POORT. LA PO." The first two words mean "gate of Muiden" which suggests Amsterdam, but the inscription as a whole cannot be explained. Three other flags carry the ordinary monogram of the Dutch East India Company, the letters V-O-C (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie.)

The armament tallies with the statement in the inscription, since there are eighteen guns on one side. Even in a small reproduction many interesting details can be seen. Most of the little men on deck are evidently officers. One of them with his enormous pipe and his negro servant must be the captain. There are several sailors aloft. On the poop is a trumpeter sounding a curiously twisted instrument. The figurehead is a dragon-like Dutch (or rather Zeeland) lion.

* One *shaku*, about one foot, English, is a tenth of a *jo*. 14 *jo* is equivalent to 145 ft., old Dutch.

† One *ri* is about one twenty-eighth of a degree, or 3,930 metres.

The original print is in two colours, black and red, the hull being dark red throughout. Other parts have been coloured light red by hand; for instance, the upper part of the Dutch flag wherever it appears and also the jackets of the officers, who are therefore dressed in red uniform. The print is remarkable for its large dimensions, 33 ins. by 26½ ins. Japanese woodcuts from a single block of this size are very rare indeed. Probably a Dutch copper engraving was used as a model by the Japanese artist. This would, at any rate, explain the half-tone shadows on the sails. These point to imitation, for the old Japanese artists never used them in their work. Unfortunately there is no signature to be found.

So much for the description of the print itself. Thanks to the kind help of Dr. J. de Hullu, keeper of the Colonial Records at The Hague ("M. M." p. 220, No. 30), I can now proceed to the identification of the ship. She is the East Indiaman *Schellach*, of the Zeeland Chamber. She was named after an old country seat in the neighbourhood of Vere or Ter Vere, near Middelburg. This port was well known on account of its very old relations with Scottish merchants and the existence of a Staple Court: from thence started the Dutch fleet that took the Prince of Orange to England in 1688. The ship's history could be traced from the List of Outward Bound Ships. (See p. 220, No. 30.) I will give only a few notes.

First Voyage:—*Schellach*, built 1737 for the Chamber of Zeeland, length 145 feet, 140 "lasts," 225 men. Sailed from Rammekens (Flushing), June 1st, 1737. Arrived at Batavia, Feb. 14th, 1738.

Second Voyage:—225 men. Sailed from Rammekens, April 20th. Arrived at Batavia, Nov. 19th. Returned to Zeeland in September, 1741.

Third Voyage:—400 men. Sailed from Rammekens, Nov. 1st, 1742. Arrived at Batavia, May 28th, 1743. Returned to the Texel (chartered by the Chamber of Amsterdam), June 17th, 1744.

Fourth Voyage:—(Chamber of Amsterdam), 189 men. Sailed from the Texel, June 14th, 1745. Arrived at Batavia, August 17th. Returned to Rammekens (for the Chamber of Zeeland), August 12th, 1746.

Fifth Voyage:—(Chamber of Zeeland), 309 men. Sailed from Rammekens, August 20th, 1747. Arrived at Batavia, May 18th, 1748.

The ship never returned to Holland. In a manuscript

giving details of the ships sailing from and arriving at Batavia I found that the *Schellach* sailed from Batavia for Japan on July 2nd, 1748, and returned on Nov. 7th, 1749. Thus she was in Japan in 1748-9, and this must be when the print was made.

From the dimensions in the Japanese description and the statements in the Dutch records we can classify the *Schellach* as a ship of the second-rate, 145 ft. by 36 ft. by 15 ft., with 36 guns.* She may therefore be compared with the fine model at Rotterdam, mentioned by Mr. Crone in his article on Dutch Naval Museums. This model is a reproduction of the sister ships, *Padmos* (1722) and *Blydorp* (1723). The latter vessel has a sad reputation because of her disastrous wreck on the West African coast on her outward voyage in 1733.

* The East Indiamen of the first rate were 160 ft. by 40 ft. by 17 ft., with 38 guns. Those of the third or smallest rate were 130 ft. by 36 ft. by 14 ft., with 26 guns.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RIGGING.

BY ALAN MOORE.

RUNNING RIGGING OF THE TOPMASTS AND TOPGALLANT MASTS.

IN the seventeenth century the old windrope,† which in Elizabethan days sent up the topmasts, was replaced, at least in name, by the top rope. In the gear proposed for the *Bear* in 1618 we read of a top rope simply, without mention of any pendant, for the fore and mainmasts. The main mizzen, and bonaventure mizzen topmasts seem to have been unprovided with any top tackle gear.

The fall of the top rope led through one of the sheaves in the fore and main knight.

Heywood in 1660 gives pendants and falls for the fore and main top ropes, and a single rope for the mizzen topmast. Bond,

†cf. French *gindere sse*, XVIII. century and perhaps later.