PART TWO

MEDIALITY

CHAPTER SEVEN

CELEBRATING A TROJAN HORSE. MEMORIES OF THE DUTCH REVOLT IN BREDA, 1590–1650*

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In 1866 the chief inspector of the fortifications of the Dutch city of Breda signed an affidavit testifying that he had found a piece of peat inside one of the brick walls of the city's castle. Joined together by a piece of string, peat and affidavit were allotted to the collection of the provincial museum of Brabant, where they still can be found today.¹ To understand why this piece of peat was handled with such care, and ended up in a museum, we need to go back to the year 1590, when Breda was recaptured by the Dutch Republic from Alessandro Farnese, governor of the Habsburg Netherlands. This was no ordinary attack, however, but one that was achieved by stealth. Seventy Dutch soldiers were smuggled into the city while hiding in the barge of the local supplier of peat to the castle of Breda. Once inside the castle, soldiers overpowered the small Italian garrison and recaptured the city.²

Although the peat's provenance was endorsed only through its place of discovery, its presence in the castle apparently reminded officials in nineteenth-century Breda of the way the soldiers hid in the barge, the cunning manner in which the attack had been prepared and executed, and the excellent outcome of this endeavour. It was these circumstances that rendered a simple piece of peat found in a wall of the castle into a significant find and an illustration of how a vivid memory culture surrounding the peat barge had developed in Breda. Yet, in the seventeenth century the local commemoration of the attack of 1590, and the role which

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¹ Noordbrabant Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch, inventory number 05957.

² J.P. Meeuwissen, "...de onderste turven levendich", het verhaal van de inname", in J.F. Grosfeld et al. (eds.) *1590–1990. Het Turfschip van Breda* (Breda: Breda's Museum, 1990), 18–39.

memories of this event would play in Breda's urban community had not been self-evident.

While the memory culture around most of the events during the Dutch Revolt against the Habsburg authorities started on a local level and was incorporated into a 'national' memory canon at a later stage, the commemoration of the peat barge seems to have developed the other way around. The ruse of the peat barge was celebrated immediately as a new Trojan horse in pamphlets and news tidings all over the Northern Netherlands. In these media, Breda appeared only as the scene of action.³ There were good reasons for common 'national' interest in the peat barge attack: the attack had been organised and executed by the army of the Dutch Republic, without any help or interference from the people inside the city of Breda. The heroes of this episode were not the locals of the Brabant town but the brave soldiers of the States' Army. Furthermore, the attack on Breda was celebrated as the beginning of a series of victories by Stadholder Maurice, which was to last for ten glorious years.⁴

In Breda itself, there was less to celebrate. The city's population had been loyal to its Habsburg rulers. Moreover, the citizens of Breda did not have their own stories of the event to remember. The peat barge attack was directed against the castle instead of the city, and the magistrate of Breda had refused to let the soldiers in. It was the soldiers and skippers who manned the barge who kept the personal memories of the coup alive.⁵ Nevertheless a local memory culture surrounding the peat barge began to emerge in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Paradoxically, the memory of the peat barge finally became so dominant that other crucial events in the town were overshadowed by it. Even though the town suffered two more sieges during the first half of the seventeenth century, in 1624–25 by the Spanish army and in 1637 by the Dutch army, these episodes left fewer traces in the local memory culture. While in other cities, such as Haarlem and Leiden, memories of sieges were incorporated into the civic memory canon, Breda continued to commemorate the memories

³ *Histoire memorable de la reprise de la ville et chateau de Breda au pays de Brabant, au mois de mars, 1590* (Middelburg, 1591), 5; *Een nieu Geusen Liedten-Boecxken* (The Hague, 1592), f. 71r.

⁴ Simon Groenveld, 'De man met de loden schoenen. Een levensschets', in Kees Zandvliet (ed.) *Maurits, Prins van Oranje* (Amsterdam: Waanders, 2000), 82–151, there 23–24; A.Th. van Deursen, *Maurits van Nassau, 1567–1625: de winnaar die faalde* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2005), 58–59.

⁵ Simon Vosters, 'Een Spaans soldaat over Breda ten tijde van Parma', *De Oranjeboom* 13 (1960), 102–120, there 112, 118.

of the peat barge instead.⁶ The Brabant town was therefore rather unique in its appropriation of a national attack with slim connections to the local community.

The aim of this article is to understand how the peat barge developed as the dominant memory of the Dutch Revolt in Breda during the seventeenth century. I will investigate who was involved in this process and ask why the sieges of 1625 and 1637 do not seem to have influenced the existing memory culture of the 1590 peat barge attack. In the literature on Breda, some of the answers to these questions can be found, as the political and religious impact of the peat barge attack on the city and its elite have been studied thoroughly. Yet, most historical research on the issue has concentrated on the period between 1590 and 1625, and again after 1637 when Breda once more became part of the Dutch Republic.⁷ Moreover, existing studies have focused either on the peat barge or on the two sieges and have not tried to explain why the events of 1590 were commemorated so much more extensively than the sieges. To do so we must analyse the development of the local memory culture in a long-term perspective. In this article, I will therefore explore the commemoration of the peat barge attack from 1590 until the end of the seventeenth century and consider the evolution of this iconic event as a constitutive part of civic memory in Breda in order to show how this memory reached its iconic status.

This chapter will examine a wide range of material sources. Most of this material has already been described in an exhibition catalogue in 1990, during the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the peat barge attack.⁸ Still, these sources have never been examined as constituting a broader so-called 'memory landscape' which not only analyses objects

⁶ See for example Judith Pollmann, 'Een "blij-eindend" treurspel. Leiden, 1574', in Herman Amersfoort et al. (eds.) *Belaagd en belegerd* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2011), 118–145; Marianne Eekhout, 'De kogel in de kerk. Herinneringen aan het beleg van Haarlem, 1573–1630', *Holland. Historisch tijdschrift* 43 (2009), 108–119.

⁷ See for example, Simon Groenveld, '“Breda is den Bosch waard” Politieke betekenis van het innemen van Breda in 1625 en 1637', *De Oranjeboom* 41 (1988), 94–109; Marijke Meijer Drees, 'Liever een rechtvaardige oorlog dan een geveinsde vrede. Politieke propaganda in een vroeg zeventiende-eeuws toneelstuk over het turfschip van Breda', *De Oranjeboom* 43 (1990), 1–15; R.H.M. van Immerseel, *Breda 1568–1600. De politieke elite in een frontierstad* (Breda: Gemeentearchief Breda, 1999); Ton Kappelhof, 'De stedelijke financiën van 's-Hertogenbosch en Breda onder de Republiek', *TSEG* 3 (2006), 96–117; F.A. Brekelmans, 'Aanzien en luister van de stad Breda van de 16de tot de 18de eeuw', *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis* 68 (1985), 157–172.

⁸ Grosfeld et al. (eds.), *1590–1990: Het Turfschip van Breda*.

and textual sources in conjunction but also maps who had access to different material and immaterial sources. This approach therefore enables researchers to examine both the dynamics and the reach of early modern memory cultures.

The Celebration of a New Trojan Horse

On 4 March 1590 the city of Breda was captured by the Dutch. An ordinary peat barge, disguised to smuggle seventy soldiers, entered the castle of Breda and subsequently overpowered the garrison and forced an entry into the city. The plan for this attack had been the work of Stadholder Maurice and Holland's advocate Johan van Oldenbarnevelt with the help of the barge's skipper. Because the soldiers at the gate knew the skipper they did not search his boat properly, and at midnight, after several hours of waiting, the soldiers overwhelmed the guard from within the castle.⁹ Within the city of Breda the magistrate tried to convince the Italian garrison of the castle to fight, but once the city authorities realised that Maurice's army was approaching and further resistance was pointless, they changed their tune and celebrated victory. Breda had been liberated by the States' army and joined the Dutch Republic.¹⁰

For Stadholder Maurice and the States General the conquest of the strategic city of Breda was a breakthrough in the war against the Habsburg Netherlands and marked the beginning of a successful sequence of other triumphs in cities such as Zutphen, Deventer, Hulst, Nijmegen and Groningen. Moreover, the outcome and execution of the attack proved that the States' army could achieve victory without casualties due to fire, pillaging or fighting.¹¹ Soon the news of the Dutch Trojan horse spread through the Low Countries in poetry, prints and beggar songs.¹² Inspired by the excitement of the news of Maurice's first great victory, the national festivities in

⁹ Meeuwissen, '... de onderste turven levendich', *passim*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹ Groenveld, 'De man met de loden schoenen', 23–24; Van Deursen, *Maurits van Nassau*, 58–59.

¹² Anton van Duinkerken, 'Het Turfschip van Breda als poëtisch motief', *De Oranjeboom* 10 (1957), 12–47, there 20–27; Frans Hogenberg, Breda door verrassing ingenomen, 1590, Scheepvaartmuseum Amsterdam and Stadsarchief Breda, Breda Beeldcollectie, nr 1989 1855; Christi Klinkert, *Nassau in het nieuws. Nieuwsprenten van Maurits van Nassaus militaire ondernemingen uit de periode 1590–1600* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2005), 70–75.

1590 were extensive. The success was celebrated in many cities across the Low Countries with bonfires, bell ringing and church services.¹³

The significance of Breda's capture for the States General was also expressed in the way they celebrated the victory. Both the States General and individual provinces issued copper and silver jetons to mark the events. These jetons, which were used by officials to assist them in collecting taxes, were seen by many and so propagated the importance of the attack throughout the Low Countries.¹⁴ Besides these jetons, the States General commissioned commemorative medals depicting their victory, for all the participants in the peat barge attack. This commission represented the first time such a medal was issued and started a tradition for other memorable events during the Revolt. This medal was made out of gold and worth twenty-four guilders, a small fortune for the soldiers and skippers involved in the attack (figure 4).¹⁵ On top of this reward, the soldiers and skippers received two months' pay from the city of Breda and other financial compensation.¹⁶

The magistrate of Breda, after their initial reluctance to let the States' army into the city, now became actively involved in rewarding their conquerors with gifts. When the States General decided to purchase the damaged peat barge from the skippers to compensate them for their loss, it was taken out of the water to be put on display on the docks. Originally, the States General had agreed to sink the ship in the castle of Breda 'in eternal commemoration' of 1590 but soon it became clear that a sunken barge would block the city's waterway.¹⁷ The decision to lift the barge out of the water and to put it on display ensured that the city of Breda possessed the most important reminder or 'relic' of the (soon to become) legendary peat barge attack. In 1625 it was said to have been on display on

¹³ Meeuwissen, '... de onderste turven levendich', 35.

¹⁴ Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inventory numbers NG-VG-3-726, NG-VG-3-727-A, NG-VG-3-727-B and NG-VG-3-727; Jaco Zuijderduijn, 'Schuiven, schenken, strooien, of sparen? Het gebruik van rekenpenningen in de 16de eeuw', *Holland. Historisch tijdschrift* 43 (2011), 24–36, there 27–30.

¹⁵ *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal* 7 (1590–1592), ed. N. Japikse (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1923), 22.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20–22; Stadsarchief Breda (SAB), ARCo001, number 2483, Stukken betreffende de uitbetaling van twee maanden soldij door de stad Breda aan twee compagnieën bij de inname van de stad door staatse troepen.

¹⁷ Meeuwissen, '... de onderste turven levendich', 38; Japikse, *Resolutiën* 7 (1590–1592), 22.

Fig. 4a. Gerard van Bijlaer, commemorative medal peat barge of Breda, 1590, gold, Noordbrabants Museum 's-Hertogenbosch, front.

Fig. 4b. Back.

the market square, proof of the importance which the magistrate of Breda now attributed to the events of 1590.¹⁸

Another reminder of the episode of the peat barge was the new governor of the city. Charles de Heraugière, the captain of the soldiers in the barge, had been appointed as governor of Breda in 1590.¹⁹ To celebrate his arrival, the city presented him with a silver dish and two bottles.²⁰ These gifts were an important gesture by the magistrate to show their appreciation of the new urban regime. This act was especially relevant, because although the magistrate had changed since 4 March, a number

¹⁸ Poppo van Burmania, *Enege gedenckwerdege geschiedenissen. Kroniek van de Friese militair Poppo van Burmania uit de Tachtigjarige Oorlog*, ed. Wiebe Bergsma (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 92.

¹⁹ Meeuwissen, '...de onderste turven levendich', 36.

²⁰ Grosfeld, *1590–1990*, 109.

of prominent citizens had been allowed to retain their posts, even though they had previously served the enemy. Therefore, it was necessary for them to demonstrate their loyalty to the new regime.²¹ Another example of such a gift was the 'coupe-tasse' commissioned for Count Philips von Hohenlohe, who had led the States' army outside Breda's gates. Because he had excused the city from paying him his reward of two months' wages, the magistrate of Breda decided in 1600 to present him with a large drinking goblet on which a detailed account of the attack including the roles played by Von Hohenlohe and the magistrates was depicted.²² The commission, executed by silversmith Marcus Elias of Breda, cost over 1000 guilders. The goblet shows the magistrates holding their hats in their hands while negotiating the future of their city after the army captured the castle. This reference to the humble position of the magistrate after 1590 was another sign of newly found loyalty. The message of the goblet therefore focused primarily on the prosperous future Breda could expect now that it had come under the control of the Republic.²³

Appropriating the Peat Barge

In addition to showering participants with gifts and embracing the attack by putting the barge on display in the centre of Breda the new magistrate also started to celebrate the victory annually on 4 March. In 1616, a play written by poet Jacob Duym in 1606 was performed for this occasion.²⁴ Even when Breda was besieged by the Spanish Army in 1624, the city still celebrated the anniversary of the return to the prince of Orange in 1590 with cannon fire.²⁵ In 1610 a new place of memory relating to the attack was created when a freshly dug part of Breda's waterway was given the name *Spanjaardsgat* or 'Spaniard's gap' in reference to the breach in the Spanish

²¹ After 1590 the magistrate in Breda consisted of Reformed citizens, but Catholic members of the urban elite were still included. These magistrates opted for a moderate political course. See Simon Groenveld, 'Een notabele frontiere. Breda en zijn regenten in het spanningsveld tussen noord en zuid, 1576–1610', *De Oranjeboom* 43 (1990), 16–39, there 26, 31–32; Immerseel, *Breda 1568–1600*, 67, 81.

²² Grosfeld, *1590–1990*, 109; Meeuwissen, '... de onderste turven levendich', 29–34.

²³ Meeuwissen, '... de onderste turven levendich', 29–34; Kees Zandvliet (ed.), *Maurits, Prins van Oranje* (Amsterdam: Waanders, 2000), 271.

²⁴ Meeuwissen, '... de onderste turven levendich', 38.

²⁵ Eimermann, 'De Breda obsessa', 123–124.

defence during the 1590 attack.²⁶ The magistrate of Breda thus successfully appropriated the attack of 1590 by actively creating a memory landscape inside the city walls. The barge and the celebrations could be visited freely by citizens and tourists in Breda.

The soldiers in the barge were very proud of their achievements, but their stories did not normally form part of the local civic memory. For example, young Rochus Rees was painted in 1622 wearing a large, gold medal depicting the peat barge (figure 5).²⁷ This medal, which he probably inherited through the female line, served as a symbol of his ancestor's involvement in the attack more than thirty years before.²⁸ Others did not have the funds to depict themselves or their descendants wearing the medals, but just passed down the medal itself, and this practice continued for centuries.²⁹ Or they requested payment of pensions and other amounts of money in relation to their role in the attack of 1590.³⁰ The personal attachment to the attack thus lived on beyond Breda, which ensured that the story stayed alive across the Low Countries.

Within Breda there were few people who could tell personal stories associated with the attack, but one man in particular kept his personal memories of the peat barge alive: Captain Charles de Heraugière. This nobleman from Cambrai had served in the States army for many years, but his reputation had been compromised by his involvement in the plans of the earl of Leicester in 1587–88.³¹ Therefore, his position as captain of the peat barge offered an opportunity to clear his name. After the successful completion of his mission De Heraugière was named governor of Breda and given a medal and several pieces of silver. He was so proud of his achievements that he also commissioned two objects to commemorate his part in the events of 1590: a painting (figure 6) and a silver table piece.

²⁶ Th. Roest van Limburg, *Het kasteel van Breda. Aanteekeningen betreffende het voormalig Prinsenhof te Breda* (Schiedam: Roelants, 1904); Pieter Nuyts, *De Bredaasche Klio* (Amsterdam, 1697).

²⁷ Anonymous, Kinderportret, 1622, oil on panel, Dordrechts Museum.

²⁸ The list of soldiers does not include the name 'Rees'. 'Krijgsvolk in het turfschip van Breda 1590', *De Navorscher* 13 (1883), 170–171.

²⁹ Testament Sijloo family, Gemeentearchief Rotterdam (GAR), Notariële akten, Delfshaven, 3865 number 32 (1704) and 3878 number 125 (1723).

³⁰ See for example 24 November 1608, 8 June 1612, 6 May 1620 and 5 March 1622, *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal Oude en Nieuwe Reeks 1576–1625*, 7 vols. (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1915–1994), 331 (1608), 667 (1612), 456 (1620) and 426 (1622).

³¹ John Lothrop Motley, *History of the United Netherlands: from the death of William the Silent to the Twelve Years' Truce 3* (1590–1600) (Reproduction 1867 edition, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2011), 7.

Fig. 5. Anonymous, portrait of Rochus Rees, 1622, oil on panel, Museum Huis van Gijn, Dordrecht.

Fig. 6. Anonymous, Charles de Heraugières (1556–1601), after 1590, oil on panel, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

De Heraugière's portrait depicted the captain of the barge, proudly wearing his medal. A Latin text was positioned beside his head, explaining the events of 1590. Although it is not clear whether he commissioned the painting himself, it conveyed the same triumphant message as the depiction of Rochus Rees.³² The second piece De Heraugière commissioned was a spectacular commemorative object: a small silver peat barge. He wanted to create a 'memory of the capture of the castle and city of Breda by way of a peat barge' and for this memory he was willing to spend 900 guilders.³³ After the governor's death, his widow offered the ship to the States General in 1611, and since it represented such an important event the States bought the object from her.³⁴ What had once started as a personal memory of the peat barge now became part of its national memory culture. But while States General bought the ship to prevent it from being melted or sold to someone who did not appreciate its commemorative value, they did not, apparently, think it was essential for them to keep the ship. When Charles de Heraugière's son petitioned the States General to return the ship to him in 1621, he received the silverware on the promise that he would not sell or pawn it without their consent.³⁵

Although this meant that the silver barge disappeared from the public domain, the short period in possession of the States General points to the continuous appreciation for the memory of the peat barge. It is also significant that De Heraugière's widow turned to the States General with her request instead of to the magistrate of Breda. Even though public commemoration had been appropriated on an urban level, his widow appealed to the States General, either because she thought she would receive a better price or because she wanted to emphasise her husband's importance during the Revolt and wanted to think of the episode of the peat barge as a national rather than as a local event.

The Peat Barge Destroyed. The Siege of 1625

The national value of the peat barge had been emphasised since 1590. In songs, plays, news tidings and prints about the attack the skipper, Captain

³² Anonymous, Charles de Heraugières (1556–1601), after 1590, oil on panel, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, SK-A-575.

³³ S. Muller, 'Een zilveren turfschip van Breda', *Oud Holland* 32 (1914), 72.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal. Nieuwe Reeks 1610–1670* 5 (1621–1622), ed. J. Roelevink (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), 370.

De Heraugière or Maurice were celebrated as the heroes of the peat barge without referring to Breda as much more than the place of action.³⁶ The role of Stadholder Maurice was commemorated especially after his series of military victories in the 1590s and in the prelude to the Twelve Years Truce (1609–1621). In 1601 a new Nassau genealogy was published which featured Maurice's victories such as the peat barge attack in prints.³⁷ In 1606 Jacob Duyum wrote six plays to commemorate the Spanish cruelties and Dutch victories including one relating to the events in Breda in 1590. Duyum, as a member of the anti-peace faction in Dutch politics, emphasised Maurice's successes to convince the peace faction that new victories would and could be achieved.³⁸ And in 1614 the city of Amsterdam chose to honour the 1590s victories by commissioning a silver dish depicting these military triumphs.³⁹ Thus we find the history of the peat barge being widely used in national propaganda at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Yet while the Dutch Republic celebrated its heroes in the period after 1590, in 1621 at the end of the Twelve Years Truce in the war between the Republic and its Habsburg foes, conflict returned to Breda. The strategic and military importance of the city made it one of the most important targets for the Spanish army, and in 1624 the Habsburg commander Ambrogio Spinola therefore commenced a long siege. Prince Maurice tried to lure the Habsburg troops away from Breda but failed in this attempt. On 23 April 1625, several months before the siege was decided in favour of Spinola, the stadholder died. On 2 June 1625 the capitulation treaty was signed by the magistrate of Breda, and on 5 June the Spanish victors entered the city.⁴⁰

The loss of the strategic city of Breda made a great impression in the Dutch Republic and the Habsburg Netherlands. In the Republic, the loss was considered a personal defeat for the new stadholder, Frederick Henry, who, with the city, lost his family's barony, while the States General also

³⁶ 'Een nyeu Liedeken vant innemen van Breedā', in E.T. Kuiper and P. Leendertz (eds.), *Het Geuzenliedboek* (Zutphen: W.J. Thieme, 1924), 21–25; Duinkerken, 'Het Turfschip van Breda', 17, 22; Klinkert, *Nassau in het nieuws*, 75–77.

³⁷ See for example, Bartolomeus Dolendo, *Inname van Breda 1590, 1597–1601*, engraving, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-80.089; Klinkert, *Nassau in het nieuws*, 76–77.

³⁸ Meijer Drees, 'Liever een rechtvaardige oorlog', 1–4, 11.

³⁹ Adam van Vianen, *Schaal met veld- en zeeslagen uit de Tachtigjarige Oorlog, 1614*, metal, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, BK-AM-17-A. See also Klinkert, *Nassau in het nieuws*, 82.

⁴⁰ V.A.M. Beermann et al. (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Breda 2. Aspecten van de stedelijke historie, 1568–1795* (Schiedam: Interboek International, 1977), 55–56; Groenveld, 'Breda is den Bosch waerd', 98–100.

lost control over a large part of western Brabant.⁴¹ For the Habsburg Netherlands and Spain, however, Spinola both avenged the humiliating attack with the peat barge and recaptured a strategic city in the northern Netherlands. In the celebrations that followed the end of the siege, Spinola ordered the destruction of all evidence of the peat barge attack, including archival records and the old barge that still stood in the city centre to commemorate the attack.⁴² In the days following the siege, 'the ship ... that had transported the pious Trojans' was burned.⁴³

The burning of the barge also returned in popular Habsburg imagery following the siege of 1625. For example, Paulus Pontius made an engraving after a portrait of Archduchess Isabella in 1625 in which he incorporated the rudder of the peat barge in the cornice to emphasise her role as conqueror of Breda.⁴⁴ Another engraving, published in Antwerp, depicted a fictitious funeral procession of the Dutch regime leaving Breda with the peat barge in the middle foreground (figure 7). In the dialogue below the illustration the peat barge is described

And there underneath the roof the peat barge which was preserved to commemorate that thirty five years ago it endangered the city, in this triumph comes in usefully to make a merry fire.⁴⁵

Frisian nobleman and soldier Poppo of Burmania noted that

As soon as they entered with their garrison, the Spaniards chopped the peat barge, by which the city was captured before, to pieces, since it stood on display on the market [square].⁴⁶

Both sources remark on the fact that the barge had been a successful object of memory for Breda. The efforts of the magistrate of Breda to create a memory culture of the peat barge and to appropriate the attack as the story of the city had therefore been effective. The barge, which was the

⁴¹ Zandvliet, *Maurits*, 222.

⁴² Y.P.W. van der Werff, 'Rond het Turfschip', *De Oranjeboom* 11 (1958), 96–104, there 99–100.

⁴³ Nicolaes van Wassenauer, *Historisch verhael alder ghedenck-weerdichste geschiedenissen die hier en daer in Europa 3* (Amsterdam, 1626), 85. See also Constantijn Huygens, *De gedichten van Constantijn Huygens*, ed. J.A. Worp, 3 vols. (1636–1644) (Groningen: Wolters, 1893), 36; Duinkerken, 'Het Turfschip van Breda', 36.

⁴⁴ Paulus Pontius, D. Isabella Clara Eugenia, Hispaniarum Infans etc., 1626, engraving, British Museum, Rib.141; Beermann, *Geschiedenis van Breda*, 406.

⁴⁵ Anonymous, *Treurfeest der Calvinisten*, 1625, print, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inventory number 19590019.

⁴⁶ Burmania, *Enege gedenckwerdege geschiedenissen*, 92.

Fig. 7. Anonymous, *Treur-feest der Calvinisten, midtsgaeders de wt-vaert van Breda*, 1625, etching, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

most important relic of the events of 1590, had become part of the urban memory landscape. The peat barge, prominently on display in the city centre, had been the symbol of the Calvinist submission of Breda, and as such was now subjected to ritual destruction.⁴⁷

Spinola's attempts to erase the traces of the humiliating defeat were temporarily successful. Moreover, as the Dutch had done before him in 1590, the Habsburg capture of Breda in 1625 also became the subject of national propaganda. The government in the Habsburg Netherlands commissioned medals and a map to commemorate the event.⁴⁸ In Spain, the siege became one of the Habsburg successes which became very popular in the 1630s and which were cited as a source of future inspiration. Its most famous representation, by Diego Velázquez, retains its renown.⁴⁹ For Breda, however, the period between 1625 and 1637 proved to be only an interruption in Dutch rule. For the Spanish army the siege of 1625 had been a costly affair. Shortly afterwards, stadholder Frederick Henry conquered important cities in the border regions of the Dutch Republic, including Groenlo in 1627, 's-Hertogenbosch in 1629, and Maastricht in 1632, before finally recapturing Breda in October 1637.⁵⁰ The city could now re-embark on creating a memory culture as once again a part of the Dutch Republic.

The Return of the Peat Barge

Through his strategic victory in Breda in 1637, Frederick Henry had recaptured his family's seat, avenged the loss of the city in 1625 and achieved greater security for the key province of Holland.⁵¹ After his victory Frederick Henry did not visit the city. Although he ordered that an annual celebration should be organised on 10 October, the day the Dutch army entered the city, this decree was never observed.⁵² Neither did the siege of

⁴⁷ Grosfeld, *1590–1990*, 37, 104.

⁴⁸ See for example, Noordbrabants Museum, Collection, Inventory numbers 03663, 04530.2 and 04530.3; Zandvliet, *Maurits*, 224–416.

⁴⁹ For example, Diego Velázquez, the surrender of Breda, 1635, oil on canvas, Prado Madrid; Zandvliet, *Maurits*, 417; Vosters, *Het beleg en de overgave van Breda*, 205–208.

⁵⁰ Groenveld, 'Breda is den Bosch waerd', 101–109; J.W.M. Schulten, 'Het beleg van Breda in 1637', *De Oranjeboom* 41 (1988), 156–167, there 161; W. Klinkert, 'Het beleg verslagen. Ooggetuigen, tijdgenoten en historieschrijvers over het beleg van Breda in 1637', *De Oranjeboom* 41 (1988), 110–123, there 110–112.

⁵¹ Groenveld, 'Breda is den Bosch waerd', 101–109; Schulten, 'Het beleg van Breda', 161; Klinkert, 'Het beleg verslagen', 110–112.

⁵² Schulten, 'Het beleg van Breda', 164–166.

1637 ever reach the same standing in seventeenth-century histories as the sixteenth-century sieges of Leiden and Alkmaar or Frederick Henry's 1629 victory at 's-Hertogenbosch. Even the official date of surrender, 8 October, coincided with the relief of Alkmaar, which was still considered more significant than the siege of Breda.⁵³

From a national perspective, however, the siege of 1637 nevertheless received ample attention, sometimes in combination with a reminder of the peat barge episode. The States General immediately commissioned a medal to celebrate the surrender of Breda in both 1590 and 1637 (figure 8). The peatbarge is displayed on the left while on the right the starving patroness of Breda represents the siege of 1625. In the middle a harnessed arm appears from the sky, referring to Divine Providence and the way Frederick Henry won his victory in 1637. This reading of the imagery is confirmed by the caption which states: 'In the past the road was cleared by starvation or cunning, yet now by force.'⁵⁴

Despite pointing to the different ways in which the city had been conquered in the past, the connection between 1590 and 1637 was made obvious. As in 1590, the significance of the siege of 1637 went beyond Breda. Like Maurice, Frederick Henry was praised for his role in the victory, and the event became national news.⁵⁵ The siege of 1637 was also painted many more times than the peat barge attack, and depictions of the event could be found hanging in private homes in the Low Countries in the 1640s.⁵⁶ Later in the seventeenth century, after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the topic continued to remain popular.⁵⁷

In due course, there emerged a local and personal memory culture after 1637. Yet, the sources reveal that 1637 was more frequently described by authors from outside the city than by those from Breda.⁵⁸ Although indi-

⁵³ Ibid., 118–119.

⁵⁴ Johannes Loeff, *Breda heroverd door Frederik Hendrik, 1638*, silver, Noordbrabants Museum, 's-Hertogenbosch, inventory numbers 03679. This is one of two medals issued to commemorate the victory of Frederik Hendrik; the other does not contain references to earlier sieges, inventory number 03680.

⁵⁵ Boxhorn, *Geschiedenis van het beleg*; Klinkert, 'Het beleg verslagen', 118.

⁵⁶ The Frick Collection, Montias Database, inventory numbers 174.0013, 369.0017, 432.0019, 464.0067, only one painting is known of the peat barge inventory number 12160.0037 via <http://research.frick.org> consulted 7 November 2012.

⁵⁷ For example, Hendrick de Meijer, *De uittocht van de Spaanse besetting van Breda, 1647–1683*, oil on panel, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, SK-A-1511; Abraham van Calraet, *Officieren en dorpelingen bij een kamp buiten Breda, 1670–1680*, Paleis 't Loo, Apeldoorn; Abraham van Calraet, *Frederik Hendrik bij het beleg van Breda, ca. 1680*, Paleis 't Loo, Apeldoorn.

⁵⁸ Schulten, 'Het beleg van Breda'; Klinkert, 'Het beleg verslagen'.

And so the 'remains' of the peat barge, as Englishman Edward Brown described them in 1682, remained a prominent feature in the centre of Breda.⁶¹ Not only the rudder, but other memorials were put in place by the magistrate to commemorate the events of 1590. In 1744, local historian Thomas van Goor recounted that

One still sees today on the east side of that canal, near the back-court of the castle, some blue stones protrude from the wall, as a memorial, so people say, that the peat barge has lain at that place⁶²

Moreover, the city displayed its pride over its 'Trojan horse' when government officials visited the city. In 1767, when the States Committee visited Breda they saw that

at the rear [of the castle] 12 great and protruding stones have been placed, to commemorate the peat barge by which Prince Maurice captured the city in the year 1590; these stones that measure 60 feet at a rough estimate denote the length of an average ship, which has been burned in the year 1625 when the Spanish captured the city again by treaty, yet the rudder is still to be found in a warehouse beside the castle, being kept there in remembrance.⁶³

Through the display of the rudder, the stones in the castle and commemorative poems on the centenary of the barge in 1690, the city of Breda continued to associate itself with the peat barge.⁶⁴ Despite the potential of the stories of the siege of 1637, the magistrates chose to emphasise the heroic capture of the city in 1590.

Conclusion

The cunning capture of Breda with a peat barge in 1590 placed the city at the heart of the military history of the Dutch Republic. Stadholder Maurice's taking of the strategic city that was also his family's seat was celebrated on a national level as the new Trojan horse. Moreover, it marked the beginning of a series of military successes in the 1590s. For Breda, however, the connection to national history proved tenuous because the city's population did not share in the personal memories of the soldiers who were

⁶¹ Edward Brown, *Naukeurige en gedenkwaardige reysen van Edward Brown* (Amsterdam, 1682), 34.

⁶² Thomas van Goor, *Beschryving der stad en lande van Breda* (Breda, 1744), 63.

⁶³ Postma, 'Met een Statencommissie', 74.

⁶⁴ Diana Giesbergen, 'Het Turfschip van Breda', Meertens Instituut, Nederlandse Volksverhalenbank, via verhalenbank.nl, consulted 30 October 2012.

involved in the attack. With the exception of the new governor Charles de Heraugière these soldiers had moved on and taken their stories and mementos of the attack home with them. This meant that even though the story of the peat barge spread throughout the Low Countries, Breda itself featured only as the place of action.

The new magistrate of Breda nevertheless immediately made the decision to appropriate the attack. In this process the acquisition of the actual barge was a crucial element. The barge was put on display in the market square, plays were performed, and an annual celebration was established. After 1590 the barge became the symbol of the attack, and the centre of Breda's memory landscape. This changed when the barge was burned by Spanish army commander Spinola after he recaptured the city in 1625. Yet, the symbolic function of the barge was also confirmed in this action. The relic had become such an important part of the memories of the attack, that it needed to be destroyed. Moreover, in 1637 when Stadholder Frederick Henry secured the city for the Dutch Republic the symbol returned when the barge's rudder reappeared. Once again the barge took centre stage in the memory culture of Breda. Breda's sieges of 1625 and 1637 were commemorated on a national rather than a local level. Yet even there, the memories of the two other sieges did not displace the events of 1590 but rather emphasised the significance of the peat barge.

By examining the full range of commemorative objects and artefacts associated with the capture of Breda in the long term and comparing them with both texts and the memory culture after the sieges of 1625 and 1637, one can make some more general points. Early modern local memory cultures did not arise as a matter of course. They were the result of the actions of significant stakeholders. In some Dutch cities, those stakeholders included people of all ranks, who both added to and appropriated commemorative practices initiated by the authorities. In Breda, it was mostly the magistrates who took charge of the memory culture. Yet that is not to say that memory culture was limited to elite circles only. Although few of Breda's citizens had access to the traditional elite media such as paintings and silver, every citizen could participate in singing songs, attending plays or beholding the peat barge on display on the market square. Once we are aware of the enormous range of media being used for commemorative purposes and of the strong intermediality between them, it becomes possible to appreciate that even before the age of mass media, it was possible for the urban landscape to be saturated with significant memories, visible and understandable to all.