PART 1

International News Networks

The 1755 Lisbon Earthquake and Tsunami in Dutch News Sources

The Functioning of Early Modern News Dissemination

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On Saturday 1 November 1755 the weather was tranquil in the Dutch city of Groningen.¹ Despite the calmness, around 11 AM the water suddenly rose in the Groningen canals for a short time. Ships smashed against the quays, their lines snapped, and their masts hit each other. A leeboard of one of the ships was completely shattered. At the time, Groningen – one of the few important towns in the northeastern part of the Dutch Republic – still had an open connection with the North Sea, and so the Groningen population was used to different water levels in their canals, corresponding to the tides. This sudden rise of the water level, however, was very strange and could not be explained by the normal tides. The strange phenomenon must have been the talk of the town, the news of the day throughout the city. All eyewitnesses would have told it to their family members, to neighbours, and to other people who had not witnessed the event. During the following weeks, the Groningen population could see from the Dutch newspapers that their town was not unique in this respect. In many European cities the water had surged unexpectedly. But it was only near the end of the month that the Groningen inhabitants were informed as to why the water had suddenly risen. It was the result of a tsunami caused by the severe earthquake that had devastated Portugal's capital of Lisbon and its surroundings, a disaster that produced thousands of victims and incredible misery.²

In this chapter I will use the 1755 Lisbon earthquake and tsunami as a means to explore the dissemination of international news to the Dutch Republic in the mid-eighteenth century, addressing the following questions: what kind of

- 1 This chapter is an extension of part of my Dutch article "Groningen en het tempo van internationaal nieuws: Een vergelijking van kranten uit de 18e eeuw, toegespitst op berichten over de aardbeving en tsunami van Lissabon (1755)" in Maarten Duijvendak et al. (eds.), *Historisch jaarboek Groningen* (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2011), pp. 36–51. For comments and suggestions I am grateful to Raingard Esser, Will Slauter, and Megan Williams.
- 2 Recent studies about the Lisbon earthquake include Nicholas Shrady, *The Last Day: Wrath, Ruin, and Reason in the Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755* (New York [etc.]: Viking, 2008); Edward Paice, *Wrath of God: The Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755* (London: Quercus, 2008).

news about the earthquake reached the Netherlands, and from or via which places? How did Dutch editors process the events in their news media, and which sources did they use? How did people react to news items, such as the Lisbon earthquake, that had happened far away and weeks or months before they could read about them? What did ‘topicality’ mean for these readers? In short, this chapter elaborates for eighteenth-century news media the idea of contemporaneity, a concept defined by Brendan Dooley as “the perception, shared by a number of human beings, of experiencing a particular event at more or less the same time.”³ Furthermore, the Lisbon case offers insight into the working of European news networks, in this case stretching from the southwestern part of Europe to the Dutch Republic.

My chapter is mainly based on eighteenth-century Dutch news media, in particular newspapers in Dutch, printed in November and December 1755. First, I will analyse how those news channels reported the catastrophic news to find out what people had known or guessed about the tsunami and earthquake, and when they received information with corresponding explanations. The subsequent section deals with aspects of early modern news dissemination in Europe, and discusses what sources Dutch newspaper editors may have used, and by which routes they received their information about the tidal waves and earthquake. The last section will consider a few consequences related to the speed of early modern news dissemination, such as speculation about the causes and effects of the sudden tidal surges at a time when news media could only guess about the reasons, people’s reflection on the events and channels for this reflection, and their awareness of contemporaneity. This chapter adds a Dutch dimension to the 2005 volume of Theodore Braun and John Radner about the Lisbon earthquake.⁴

Dutch News Media about the Tsunami and Earthquake

Groningen newspaper readers could read a short account about the 1 November tidal surge in their city in the Tuesday 4 November edition of their biweekly

3 Brendan Dooley (ed.), *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), p. xiii.

4 Theodore E.D. Braun and John B. Radner (eds.), *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and reactions: SVEC 2005:02* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2005). The chapter in Braun and Radner by Anne Saada and Jean Sgard (“Tremblement dans la presse,” pp. 208–234), which was on Dutch responses, only studied several French gazettes that were printed in the Netherlands.

Opregte Groninger Courant [Sincere Groningen Newspaper].⁵ The newspaper stated, “something happened last Saturday, of which there has been no example in this country for many centuries.”⁶ The report was combined with similar messages from villages near Groningen where similar surges had also occurred. Letters from Zwolle, a town located approximately a hundred kilometres southwest of Groningen, also mentioned ship damage in the city waters. Such news items could also be found in subsequent editions of the Groningen newspaper. The Friday 7 November edition, for example, reported the inexplicable water movements in many other parts of the Dutch Republic; chandeliers in churches had swayed spontaneously and church visitors – it was All Saints’ Day for Roman Catholics – had been frightened. The Groningen editor ended with the remark that many people thought these occurrences had been caused by a light earthquake, too weak to shake the ground in a way perceptible to human beings.⁷ This was implicitly corrected in a later edition, which reported that in the Zeeland capital of Middelburg, carpenters, while repairing the Abbey Tower, had become scared when the tower had started to shake unexpectedly. In the afternoon they had resumed their renovation activities with fear.⁸

Two weeks after the 1 November event the Groningen newspaper published the first messages from abroad, describing what had happened in the German North Sea harbour of Glückstadt (near Hamburg) and, more extensively, the Baltic Sea harbour of Travemünde (near Lübeck). In Travemünde a few men had thought for a while that the movement of the water had been caused by a big fish.⁹ The 18 November Groningen edition – almost three weeks after the event had taken place – also included news about the rise of the water in the English harbour of Portsmouth, where HMS Gosport was under repair and had been shaken tremendously in her dock. After having read such news items, the Groningen newspaper readers could combine these reports with their own experiences. In the meantime there was the possibility for them to read

5 Newspaper editions are only mentioned in footnotes when they or the dates of the discussed news items do not appear in the main text.

6 Quote in Dutch: “Van hier valt te melden dat voorleeden Zaturdag yets gebeurd is waar van hier te Lande geen Voorbeeld in veele Eeuwen geweest is[.]”

7 See also the *Opregte Groninger Courant* (OGC), 11 November 1755 (<http://kranten.delpher.nl>). The OGC had started in 1743, with permission of the city government, as was necessary for all Dutch newspapers, and was also published on Fridays. Copius Hoitsema, *De drukkersgeslachten Sipkes-Hoitsema en de Groninger Courant* (Groningen: Verenigde Drukkerijen Hoitsema, 1953), pp. 80–84; Bart Tammeling, *De krant bekeken: De geschiedenis van de dagbladen in Groningen en Drenthe* (Groningen: Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 1988), pp. 20–22.

8 OGC, 18 November 1755.

9 OGC, 14 November 1755.

comparable news reports in other Dutch newspapers that were sold in Groningen or were brought to the city by visitors.

Since 1752, the Groningen newspaper's nearest 'competitor' was the *Leeuwarder Courant*, published in Friesland's capital of Leeuwarden.¹⁰ At the time the Frisian newspaper appeared once a week, on Saturday, and so the first report by this newspaper about the waves was published in the 8 November edition.¹¹ Like the Groningen newspaper, the *Leeuwarder Courant* started with information about the rise of the water nearby, in Leeuwarden and a few other Frisian towns, such as Franeker, where a horse had stampeded fearfully after confrontation with the rising water. One long sentence summarized messages from cities and villages all over the province of Holland where the water had risen:

In Amsterdam, Leiden, Delft, Haarlem, Rotterdam, Woubrugge, Boskoop, and several other places, people have noticed a motion in the water at the same time, and it is said that the chandeliers in several Amsterdam churches moved.¹²

This sentence taught the Frisian readers that the Holland population had experienced the same phenomenon as they had. The news about Travemünde was published in the subsequent edition of Saturday 15 November, thus almost simultaneously with the Groningen newspaper, which included the German news in the Friday edition of 14 November. On Saturday 22 November the Leeuwarden newspaper reported on Portsmouth and – without mentioning their names – “a few other English harbours.” These messages had been picked up in Amsterdam almost a week before, on 14 November, according to the report's date. Below this piece of news, Frisian readers could also note that French Bordeaux had been hit by a brief earthquake on 1 November.

In 1755 most Dutch newspapers were printed in the densely populated province of Holland: in Amsterdam, Haarlem, Leiden, The Hague, Delft, and Rotterdam. The city of Utrecht also had its own newspaper. Most of these

10 Marcel Broersma, *Beschaafde vooruitgang: De wereld van de Leeuwarder Courant 1752–2002* (Leeuwarden: Friese Pers Boekerij, 2002); id., “Constructing Public Opinion: Dutch Newspapers on the Eve of a Revolution (1780–1795)” in Joop W. Koopmans (ed.), *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)* (Leuven, Paris, and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), pp. 219–235.

11 See <http://www.archiefleeuwardercourant.nl>. The *Leeuwarder Courant* (LC) still exists.

12 Quote in Dutch: “Te Amsterdam, Leiden, Delft, Haarlem, Rotterdam, Woubrugge, Boskoop, en op andere Plaatzen meer, heeft men op die zelfde tyd zulk een ontroeringe in het Water bespeurd, en zo men wil, zouden te Amsterdam in verscheiden Kerken de Kroonen aan het bewegen geweest zyn.” LC, 8 November 1755.

cities' newspapers, such as the *Amsterdamse Courant*, included information about the shaking of the water in their own towns and several places in other parts of Western Europe.¹³ A few of them reported the event only briefly. The 's *Gravenhaegse* [The Hague] *Courant* of Monday 3 November, for example, published a sober message of five lines about the trembling of the earth in The Hague, and four lines concerning Amsterdam. The newspaper mentioned The Hague, with 2 November in the dateline:

Yesterday morning people felt a small trembling of the earth, which was mostly noticed in the canals, where a few vessels' ropes became untied, but causing no further damage.¹⁴

Subsequent editions, however, remained silent about similar events in other Dutch and foreign regions. Even more surprisingly, the *Utrechtse Courant* did not publish a single word about the rise of water in its own city and province.¹⁵ On Friday 7 November, which was rather late, the Utrecht newspaper included a message about what had happened in Rotterdam – slightly different from the more extensive account in the *Rotterdamse Courant* of Tuesday 4 November. Furthermore, only Glückstadt was mentioned in the 12 November edition and Bordeaux in the 21 November edition of the Utrecht newspaper, so altogether only a small selection of news concerning the topic appeared in this coranto.¹⁶

In contrast to the newspapers of Utrecht and The Hague, the Rotterdam newspaper included the news about the trembling war ship in the Portsmouth

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- 13 See e.g. *Amsterdamse Courant* (AC; used copy Amsterdam City Archives), *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* (OHC; used copy: Museum Enschedé in Haarlem), and *Hollandsche Historische Courant* (HHC; published in Delft – used copy Royal Library The Hague; thanks to Fernando Martinez Luna for his assistance), 4 November 1755. These three newspapers had editions on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.
 - 14 Quote in Dutch: "Gisteren morgen heeft men hier een kleyne schudding van een Aerdbeeving gevoeld, welkers beweeging het meest in de Gragten is geweest, zynde 'er eenige Vaertuygen van hunne Touwen afgeraekt, dog verders geen schade veroorzaakt." Used copy: The Hague Municipal Archives. The 's *Gravenhaegse Courant* (sGrC) had editions on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
 - 15 Used copy: The Utrecht Archives. The *Utrechtse Courant* (UC) was published on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Other newspapers show that the water had also risen in the province and city of Utrecht. See e.g. OHC and HHC, 6 November 1755; *Leydse Courant* (LeyC), 7 November 1755; OGC, 11 November 1755. The *Gazette d'Utrecht* of 4 November 1755 mentioned a trembling of the earth in The Hague. Saada and Sgard, "Tremblements," p. 210.
 - 16 The Amsterdam newspaper mentioned Lübeck in the 11 November edition, and Bordeaux in the 22nd, just as the Haarlem and Delft (HHC) newspapers did. The Delft newspaper mentioned Glückstadt in the 13 November edition.

docks in its edition of Thursday 13 November.¹⁷ As Rotterdam was a harbour city near the sea, it does not seem very peculiar that the Rotterdam newspaper paid more attention to the event than the newspapers of Utrecht and The Hague. Furthermore, it is logical that the Rotterdam newspaper published the English news earlier than other Dutch newspapers; most news accounts from England intended for the Dutch Republic left Harwich with the packet boat and entered the country at Hellevoetsluis near Rotterdam. From there they were disseminated to the rest of the Netherlands.¹⁸ Astonishingly, however, the *Leydse* [Leiden] *Courant* and the *Hollandsche Historische Courant*, which was published in Delft, published more news about the rising water in several Dutch cities and villages than the Rotterdam and also the Amsterdam newspaper did.¹⁹ Leiden and Delft were – like Utrecht and The Hague – not harbour cities. The Leiden and Delft editors, however, must have considered the topic an interesting one for their reading public, which they knew was found far outside their own cities.

Not before the end of the month did the Dutch newspapers present the real explanation for the sudden rise of the water in the Netherlands, preceded in most of the papers by very similar reports – same content and same structure – about an earthquake in Madrid.²⁰ Subsequently, between 26 and 29 November, editions of all Dutch newspapers informed their readers about the earthquake that had forcefully struck the Portuguese capital of Lisbon and its surroundings on 1 November.²¹ As is known today, it was an earthquake with an estimated strength of almost 9 in magnitude on the Richter scale, comparable

17 Used copy: Rotterdam City Archives. The *Rotterdamse Courant* (RoC) was published on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

18 Jacob. C. Overvoorde, *Geschiedenis van het postwezen in Nederland vóór 1795, met de voornaamste verbindingen met het buitenland* (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1902), pp. 277–281. See also e.g. sGrC, 19 and 22 December 1755, in which letters that “have been seen in Rotterdam” are quoted.

19 *LeyC*, 3 and 7 November 1755 (<http://www.archiefleiden.nl <kranten>>). This newspaper had editions on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; *HHC*, 4, 6, 8, and 13 November 1755. There were reports about Portsmouth in *LeyC* on 12 and in *HHC* on 13 November 1755.

20 sGrC and *UC*, 24 November 1755; *OHC*, *HHC*, and *RoC*, 25 November; *LC*, 29 November. These reports vary between 72 and 95 words, and are similar to the report that was published in *La Gazette de Cologne*, quoted in Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” pp. 210–211. See Appendix. A message in *AC*, 25 November, with dateline “Paris, 17 November,” contains the news that there had been an earthquake across Spain and Italy on the same day that the movement of the water had happened in England, Bordeaux, Northern Germany, and almost all cities in the province of Holland. Also reported in *OGC*, 28 November 1755.

21 sGrC, 26 November 1755; *AC*, *OHC*, *HHC*, and *RoC*, 27 November; *LeyC* and *OGC*, 28 November; *LC*, 29 November.

with the Fukushima earthquake in Japan in March 2011. A terrifying tidal wave had accompanied the earthquake, and fires had destroyed most of the remaining parts of the city. The timespan of almost one month that it took this news from Portugal to reach the Dutch Republic, corresponds with average figures for the publication of Portuguese news in Dutch newspapers during the eighteenth century (Fig. 1.1).²²

As soon as the news about Lisbon reached the Dutch newspapers' printing presses, people were eager to read about the disaster, which was a rare and unusual topic for them. The chronicler Jan de Boer recorded that the 26 November edition of *'s Gravenhaegse Courant*, the first Dutch newspaper with the Lisbon news, immediately sold out. Curiosity was coupled with dismay and concern. When the merchants present at the Amsterdam stock exchange heard the tragic news, they were shocked and worried about the

FIGURE 1.1 Part of the front page of the Amsterdam newspaper of Thursday 27 November 1755, in which the first news about the Lisbon earthquake is published. Copy in Stadsarchief Amsterdam (Amsterdam City Archives), photograph by Joop Koopmans.

22 Joop W. Koopmans, "Supply and Speed of News to the Netherlands during the Eighteenth Century: a Comparison of Newspapers in Haarlem and Groningen" in *News and Politics*, pp. 185–201 (particularly Table 3).

fate of their fellow merchants and their merchandise in the Portuguese capital.²³

The Portuguese disaster must have taken the news editors by surprise. The Haarlem newspaper, for example, published the terrible news after an item on market reports that simply ended with: “no exchange rate from Lisbon.” The readers had to conclude for themselves why Lisbon did not have an exchange rate listed, which they understood, of course, after having read the earthquake news.²⁴ During the next weeks, many news accounts followed about the huge devastation, the thousands of victims, the aftershocks, Portuguese attempts to control the disaster, and the aid from other countries, in particular Spain and Great Britain. With regard to the victims, many different figures were mentioned because nobody had any idea about how many people had died or survived.²⁵

Within the Portuguese stream of news items, the Delft and Groningen newspaper editors appeared to be the only two who made an explicit connection between the Lisbon calamity and the sudden tidal surges nearby that had happened four weeks before. In its 2 December issue the Groningen newspaper quoted:

In the meantime people may conclude from all these heartbreaking and tragic messages that the rise of the water, which people here and from all over the Netherlands have noticed on the first of this month, was a general phenomenon[.]²⁶

Furthermore the editor concluded that God had spared the Netherlands.

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- 23 Jan Willem Buisman, “Het bevend Nederland: De Republiek en de aardbeving van Lissabon 1755–1756,” *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 92 (1979), pp. 20–42, at 26–27. See also Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” p. 221; Jeroen Blaak, “Informatie in een ander tijdperk: Nieuws in het dagboek van Jan de Boer (1747–1758),” *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman*, 25 (2002), pp. 57–69, at 64–66.
 - 24 In his subsequent edition of 29 November, the Haarlem editor mentioned again “no exchange rate from Lisbon,” however this time with the addition that the news corresponded with letters of 28 October that had been sent before the earthquake.
 - 25 E.g. *AC* and *RoC*, 27 November 1755; *LeyC*, 28 November 1755; *UC*, 10 December 1755; *AC*, 13 December 1755; *HHC*, 20 December 1755.
 - 26 *HHC*, 29 November 1755. The Dutch (longer quote) in *OGC*, almost the same as in *HHC*: “Ondertusschen kan men uyt alle deeze hertgrievende en naare berigten, besluyten, dat de Waterschuddingen die men den eersten passato hier en byna door geheel Nederland gevoeld heeft, algemeen geweest zy[n], en dat de Nederlanden door Gods Goedertierenheyd slegts een flauw gevoel en dreuning ondervonden hebben van de allerysselykste Aardbeeying, waardoor Lissabon is vernield geworden, en die zig langs de geheele Kust van Portugal en Spanjen tot aan Gibraltar heeft doen gevoelen.”

The Amsterdam newspaper published an extra, one-page issue on Saturday 6 December, a so-called *Na-courant* [after newspaper], including an extensive account about the disaster that had been received and most likely dispersed in Paris. The Groningen newspaper published the same text in an extra edition on Monday 8 November.²⁷ There are only slight spelling differences between the two issues, which suggests either that both editors used the same translation, or that the Groningen editor copied the Amsterdam issue very early, as it took about a day to bring the report from Amsterdam to Groningen. Such extra editions were rather unusual and emphasized the great news value of the earthquake and its consequences. Apart from commercial reasons and the wish to deliver news as fast as possible, it has to be understood, of course, that an extra edition must have been a practical solution, at least for the Groningen publisher. Most early modern printing houses were limited in capacity and in the case of newspapers, did not have much scope beyond what was needed to realize the regular editions, and so the publisher or printer could only use his printing press for extra editions on days when it was already available (Fig. 1.2).

The Dutch obviously worried about the fate of compatriots who were in or nearby Lisbon at the time of the disaster. This is reflected in their newspapers, of which several published lists of ships and persons who had survived the disaster. As early as 29 November, the Haarlem newspaper, for instance, mentioned that the Dutch consul Jan Gildemeester and a few Dutch merchants were safe.²⁸ The same news item ended, however, with the remark that nothing was known about the situation of the other Dutch envoy in Lisbon, Jean François Bosc de la Calmette. After ten days the newspaper confirmed, twice, that he was still alive. This was based on messages in private letters received from England and a letter from the diplomat himself.²⁹ In the meantime the Leiden newspaper had published the rumour that Bosc de la Calmette had not survived the disaster.³⁰ A similar tension was created, particularly for relatives and friends, by the Haarlem editor publishing a list of Dutch ships in

27 *De Voorlooper van de* [The Forerunner of the] *Groninger Dingsdaagsche* [Tuesday] *Courant*. These extra issues open with: "Paris, the first of December. Just now an extraordinary courier from Lisbon has brought the following truthful story about the miseries, which happened on the first of last month as a result of the terrible earthquake[.]" (In Dutch: "Parys, den eersten December. So even ontfangt men met een buitengewoon courier van Lissabon het volgende naauwkeurig verhaal der onheylen die den eersten der voorleeden Maand aldaar door de bewuste vreeslyke Aardbeeying zyn voorgevallen[.]").

28 Also *LeyC*, 1 December 1755.

29 *oHC*, 9 December 1755; also *sGrC* and *LeyC*, 8 December 1755.

30 *LeyC*, 3 December 1755. On both diplomats' visit to the Portuguese king, see *LeyC*, 22 December 1755.

De Voorlooper van de Groninger Dingsdaagsche Courant, Maandag den 8 December. 1755.

FRANKRYK.

PARYS den eersten December. So even ontfangt men met een buitengewoon courier van Lissabon het volgende nauwkeurig verhaal oer onheylen die den eersten der voorleeden Maand aldaar door de bewijde vreeslyke Aardbeving zijn voorgevallen lydende aldus:

Op Allerheyligen dag des morgens ten 9 uren gevoelden men door geheel Portugal en voornamelyk in de Hoofd Stad Lissabon zulk een vreeslyke Aardbeving als ooit in eenig Weereldgedeelte geweest is: deezze Stad die de Rykhte van geheel Europa was; de Diamanten aan alle de andere Natien fourneerde, en alwaar byna niet anders dan Goud in zwang gong, is tegenwoordig niet dan een stapel van Kalk en Steenbrokken, waar onder meer dan Honderd Duyzend Menschen Leevendig zijn Begraaven geworden; gelukkig zijn de Inwoonders dewelke in dit vreeslyk toeval uytlandig geweest zijn! Zy hebben ten minsten het Leeven behouden, 't welk zy mooglyk veel liever verloren zouden willen hebben, dewyl zy zig nu van Illoedverwanten en Vrienden beroofd zien. De Aardbeving volgde kort op een orkan die een verschrikkelyk Zee Water veroorzaakte: de Rivier de Taag Zwol daar door op een vreeslyke wyze en terzelve tyd hoorde men de Huysdeuren van alle kanten openbarsten, en de Muuren en Zolderingen infortren; kortom het schen als of de Jongste dag was gekomen, en dat den eenen Heen niet op den andere zoude blyven. De Menschen die nog ter ruste lagen, wierden wel haast opgewekt door 't geweldigh schudden hunner Huizen, en het geratel van 't infortren der Wooningen van hunne Nabuuren, en waren nergens anders op bedagt dan zig met de vlugt te salveeren, dog de meeste daar van, zyn elendig onder hun eyge dak vermoord; en de geeste die zig in die hooge nood uyt hunne Huizen op Straat konden begeeven, liepen met alhun magt buyten de Stad. Nimmer kan men een denkbeeld maaken van de droefheid en schrik door dit droevig schouwspel veroorzaakt, en waar van het verhaal alleen van schrik doet Zidderen: Mannen en Vrouwen van allerlei condities liepen half naakt en half gekleed langs de weg; en de voornaamste Heeren en Dames zyn in hunne onderkleederen ten Huizen uytgevloeden, dewyl men in die angstvalligheid om geen Lichaems dekking bedagt was. Werwaerds men het oog oek wende, overal zag men Huizen infortren, en onder derzelve Puyshoopen ontelbare Menschen die zig nog met de vlingt dagten te salveeren, elendig ongekoomen: Ja zelfs, wanneer men in die ontweening der geheele natuur, by zyn volkome zinnen en verstand was gebleeven, zoude men geen plaats hebben konnen uytdenken om zig te bergen, dewyl men overal de dood als met opgepalte Kaaken te gemoet zag. Hier zag men menschen door de Aardbeving op de Straaten ter neder geworpen, en gints een meenigte die door den zwaren damp, veroorzaakt door het infortren der Huizen, waren verflukt; want dewyl dit ongelukkig toeval geschied is juyf ter zelve tyd dat men in alle de voornaamste Huizen toebereidelen tot de Keuken maakte, en waar toe groote Vuuren benodigd zyn sloeg de Brand gints en weder, waar door alles in ligte laaye Vlam geraakte. Het Illoedbad by het Stormenderhand innemen van een Stad, is zoo afsgrzyklyk niet als de Aardbeving die men hier heeft uytheftan: by het eerste heeft men zig maar tegen Menschen, die schoon zeg gewapend en verwoed zyn, defendeeren; maar by het laatste moet men zig om io te spreken tegen de natuur aankanten, dewelke den ondergang der menschen zoo 't schynt behooren had. Deze stad had in desselfs omtrek 3 gebergens alle met huizen omcingeld, en van dezelve zyn 'er maar weynige, uytgenomen die de

welke zeer hoog stonden staande gebleeven, dewelke naderhand door den brand zyn verterd geworden; de alhier zig bevindende Engelse Koopluden hebben het meeste geleden, dewyl dezelve de grootste tak van negotie uitmaakten, als hebbende vercheyde Magazynen welke opgepropt waren met allerhande koopmanfchappen; en dewyl dezelve aan den voet van het gebergte lagen, om digt by de rivier te wezen, zyn ze alle, met menschen en de daar in zynde Koofbarheden weg gepeeld: drie honderd Paters Jesuiten wierden met hunnen huizen verflonden. De gevangenen van de Inquisite zig van hunne scpiers verlaten vindende openden hunne hokken, en hebben van de verwarring geprofiteerd om een onmenschelyke wraak over hunne Regters te nemen. Tot groot geluk bevond zig de Koning in zyn Lust Paleys van Belem, 't welk zyn Majesteit langs den Oever van de Taag heeft doen bouwen: Het Paleys het welk die Vorst in de stad had, is ten eenemaal verwoest, invoege die Monarch by alden hy zig nog aldaar had opgehouden, zekerlyk het leeven zoude verloren hebben; Deezze verschrikkelyke verwoesting is in minder dan 10 minuten tyds geschied: Uyt de Huizen die het laast om ver zyn gevallen, zyn de bewoonders ter naauwer nood ongekomen. Het geen de onnoemelyke Schande nog meer groot is, dat de Brazilische Vloot met dewelke Confidable Schatten zyn overgekomen, kort voor het ongevall op de Taag gearriveert was, en dat men nog de Diamanten, nog het Zilver of het Goud, met dezelve overgebragt, zal konnen weder vinden. Vercheyde Engelse en Portugese Schepen op de Rivier leggende zyn door het Woeden der Golven op de Eroegens gecommet. Het kleyn getal menschen die 't geluk getroffen hebben zig buyten de Stad te konnen retireeren, begaaven zig zommige byna geheel naakt en andere gekleed, na een groote Vlake niet verre van de Stad; en onder vercheyde Perzonen van Distinctie zag men de Franche Ambassadeur in zyn Onderkleeren, nevens denzelfs Gemalin dewelke maar een Los Kleed had aangetrokken; de andere Dames van aanzien zagen 'er veel ongeschoepter uyt, als hebbende geen de minste tyd gehad om het een of het ander aan te doen. De Menschen hebben 3 daagen lang onder Tenten dewelke men op de bovengemelde Vlake had opgejaagen, Huys gehouden; de Koning zelfs heeft zig gedurende de tyd zoo in 't open Veld als in 't Ryusg moeten behelpen. Door de groote wanorde en Confusie is 'er niet aan 't bezorgen van Leevensmiddelen gedagt, invoege omtrent 200 duyzend menschen dewelke op meergemelde Vlake zaamen gevloeyd waren, meer dan 24 uren lang aldaar geweest zyn, zonder een brokje brood te konnen genieten. De Koning van Spanjen van dezze algemene beheersheid aan Leevensmiddelen onderrigt geworden zynde heeft zyne Onderdaanen gelaft om Provifien te zenden na de Plaats daar Lissabon geftaan heeft, zonder eenig geld daar voor te eyschen. Door de zware alteratie en uythongering vielen vele Menschen in flauwte, maar wanneer men Karren en Waagens en volgelaadne Vaartuygen met Leevensmiddelen zag aankoomen viel men daar op met de uytterste greegheyl aan, zig verbedelende dat het uyt den Hemel was toegezonden. Enige onverzande Perzonen hebben zig onderftaan na de ruynen dezer Stad te begeeven alwaar zy nog het gekerm van Mannen, Vrouwen en Kinderen die ten halven vermoord zyn, aan te hooren. De Aardbeving is gedurende 10 uren tyds vercheyde malen gevoeld, esdg zyn de zwaerste schuddingen in de 10 eerste minuten geweest. Ook is Brand ontstaan in de Huizen die nog Staande waren gebleeven, en dewelke men niet heeft konnen blifchen.

Te Groningen, by JACOBUS SIPKES, Drukker
en Boekverkoper aan de Boter-Markt in de Blauwe-Engel. 1755.

FIGURE 1.2 De Voorlooper van de Groninger Dingsdaagsche Courant [The Forerunner of the Groningen Tuesday Newspaper]. Copy in Universiteitsbibliotheek Groningen (University Library Groningen).

the Lisbon harbour on 28 October in his 2 December edition, but a list of Dutch survivors only in the 9 December edition (presumably reflecting the timing of information reaching the editor himself).³¹ Although family members of seamen and merchants were used to waiting for long periods for signs of life, this must have been nerve-racking. Another Haarlem edition, and also a Delft one, explained, in a report from England, why above all many Protestant merchants had been saved; they had been outside Lisbon during the catastrophe as they wanted to avoid encounters with the Portuguese Catholics who were celebrating All Saints' Day.³² This was a soothing message for Dutch Protestants.

Relying on the newspapers for information, the Dutch authorities and population did not immediately offer aid to the Portuguese victims of the disaster, such aid, of course, not being as easy to organize as it is today. The Dutch Estates-General publicly showed their compassion to the Portuguese king rather late compared with official reactions from several other European countries. This can probably be explained by the fact that it took a few weeks before contacts had been restored with the Dutch envoy in Lisbon.³³ Although envoy Bosc de la Calmette had to pass on the Dutch sympathy and an offer to help the Portuguese, his instructions do not seem to have been supported by everybody in the Protestant world. Within Protestant circles, the idea was transmitted that the Lisbon earthquake was God's punishment of the – in their opinion – “sinful Roman Catholic Portuguese citizens.” It was alleged that it was not by chance that almost all Lisbon Protestants had been saved; they had been outside the city during All Saints' Day.³⁴

Of all the Dutch newspapers, the *Hollandsche Historische Courant* included the highest number of news accounts and letters about the Lisbon earthquake.³⁵ An explanation why the Delft newspaper squeezed the subject dry is perhaps that it simply had more space for news items as it did not have as many advertisements as the newspapers of bigger cities such as Amsterdam

31 Other news items with names of merchants or ships: *AC*, 6, 9, and 13 December 1755; *LeyC*, 5, 8, 10, and 31 December 1755; *HHC*, 9 December; *LC*, 13 December 1755; *sGrC*, 22 December 1755.

32 *OHC* and *HHC*, 11 December 1755.

33 Mentioned in *AC* en *HHC*, 27 December 1755.

34 Buisman, “Het bevend Nederland,” pp. 33–35; Matthias Georgi, *Heuschrecken, Erdbeben und Komenten: Naturkatastrophen und Naturwissenschaft in der englischen Öffentlichkeit des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: August Dreesbach Verlag, 2009), pp. 148–168; see also id., “The Lisbon Earthquake and Scientific Knowledge in the British Public Sphere” in Braun and Radner (eds.), *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755*, pp. 81–96.

35 See earlier footnotes and the many quoted letters received from Lisbon via England in *HHC*, 23, 25, and 27 December 1755.

and The Hague. Furthermore the Delft editor may have hoped to attract more readers with this sensational topic.

Sources and Routes

Many details are still unclear about how early modern newspaper editors gathered, selected, and edited their news sources. In their newspapers they systematically reveal only the geographic origin of their news items. Most of the reports in Dutch newspapers appear under a country name and start with a so-called dateline: a city name and a date.³⁶ Only a small portion of them include information about how the news message was received or the quality of the source. These start with phrases such as, "With a Courier who arrived from LISBON here (in Madrid) on the 8th of this month the regrettable tidings has been received,"³⁷ "Private LETTER from LONDON of 28 November,"³⁸ or "Summary from a letter of Captain Jan Pynappel with the date of the 11th of this [month] written from Tessel to his book-keeper here."³⁹ In his 23 December 1755 edition the Delft editor even started with this extensive introduction:

Several letters from Lisbon have been received with the latest letters from London of 16 this [month], at that place arrived with the packet boat, there already expected for several days. It is our opinion that those letters deserve to be communicated word-for-word as they are true and recent, and among them the following LETTER, *written by Sir ABRAHAM CASTRES*, the King of Great Britain's *Envoy Extr[aordinary]* at the King of Portugal, dated LISBON 6 November 1755, seems to be suitable as the first one.⁴⁰

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- 36 In 1752 the *Leeuwarder Courant* was the first Dutch newspaper that published its news items thematically.
 - 37 In Dutch: "Met een Courier, dewelke den 8 dezer Maand van LISBON alhier (te Madrid) gearriveert is, heeft men de beklaglyke tyding ontvangen." *LeyC*, 28 November 1755.
 - 38 In Dutch: "Particuliere BRIEF van LONDEN den 28 November." *LeyC*, 5 December 1755.
 - 39 In Dutch: "Extract uit een brief van Kapt. Jan Pynappel in dato den 11 dezer uit Tessel [Texel] aen zyn boekhouder alhier [Amsterdam] geschreeven." *AC*, 13 December 1755.
 - 40 Quote in Dutch: "Met de jongste brieven van Londen van den 16 deezer heeft men verscheide brieven van Lisbon ontfangen, aldaar ingekomen in de pakketboot, dewelke men aldaar reeds voor eenige dagen had verwacht. Die brieven verdienen na 't ons toeschynt ter oorzaak van hare echtheid en jongere dagteekening, dat we dezelve van woord tot woord meedeedeelen, en onder deeze komt billyk in de eerste plaats voor de volgende BRIEF, *geschreeven door den heer ABRAHAM CASTRES, extr[aordinair] envoyé des konings van Groot-Brittannie by den koning van Portugal, gedagteekent LISBON den 6 november 1755.*" *HHC*, 23 December 1755.

In this way newspaper editors tried to convince their readers at least as much as possible that they presented reliable information.⁴¹ In his 8 December 1755 issue, for example, the Leiden editor stated that he quoted “very credible messages” about Lisbon. Actually, such phrases were still vague.⁴²

Many early modern news media used the same – frequently scarce – sources, or copied messages from each other.⁴³ This was already illustrated above with the news messages about the earthquake in Madrid, which were almost identical. Although newspaper editors used other newspapers as welcome sources for their own purposes, most of the time they concealed this way of gathering news. At best they only mentioned them in general terms, such as the Haarlem editor did in his report about the rise of the water in surrounding Dutch cities, which he introduced with the words “today’s newspapers state.”⁴⁴ The reproduction in Dutch newspapers of a letter coming from the papal nuncio in Portugal is another characteristic example. The nuncio had dated his letter to his Spanish colleague with the words, “From the place where Lisbon was situated formerly,” a dramatic phrase that Dutch editors must have considered a very suitable quotation for specifying the horrible circumstances.⁴⁵ Furthermore, it is significant that all Dutch newspapers with information about the tidal surges and earthquake mentioned – apart from Lisbon – the same cities: Glückstadt, Travemünde, Portsmouth, Bordeaux, Madrid, Cadiz, Malaga, and a few other cities around the Mediterranean, even though many other European cities had also experienced the rising water.⁴⁶ This confirms the assumption that the Dutch editors copied the news from each other and from the same foreign newspapers, all depending on a limited supply of news

41 Marcel Broersma, “A Daily Truth: the Persuasive Power of Early Modern Newspapers” in Joop W. Koopmans and Nils Holger Petersen (eds.), *Commonplace Culture in Western Europe in the Early Modern Period III: Legitimation of Authority* (Leuven, Paris, and Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2011), pp. 19–34.

42 See also AC, 13 December 1755, in which a rumour is surely denied.

43 See, e.g., Will Slauter, “Le paragraphe mobile: circulation et transformation des informations dans le monde atlantique du XVIII^e siècle,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 67 (2012), pp. 363–389.

44 In Dutch: “In de Niews-papieren van heden word gemeld[.]” OHC, 4 November 1755.

45 UC, 28 November 1755; RoC, 29 November 1755; OGC, 2 December 1755; LC, 6 December 1755. Cf. Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” p. 218.

46 Reports about the rise of the water in cities and regions published in only one Dutch newspaper: HHC, 18, 20, 22, 25, and 27 November: about Hamburg, Cuxhaven, and surrounding cities, Cork and Kinsale in Ireland, Tenterden in Kent (England), Lunden (Schleswig-Holstein), and Swansea (Wales); OHC, 11 December 1755: about Swedish Falun; AC, 23 December: from Stockholm about the Norwegian coast.

sources. Only well-established newspapers could afford to have correspondents abroad.⁴⁷

Another topic with many uncertainties concerns the routes of the news. In this case, how did the Lisbon news reach the Netherlands? Dutch newspapers at the time of the earthquake show that most news items were received via or from Madrid, Paris, and London. The Haarlem and Rotterdam newspapers, for example, derived and quoted the first news about the Portuguese earthquake from Paris, where letters from Lisbon had been received.⁴⁸ This corresponds with the existing mail services of the 1750s, which news suppliers must have used. The Dutch Republic did not have direct postal connections with Portugal. A combination of French and Spanish postal services was generally employed. This route could easily have delays because of the different parties involved. Before 1760, post between Lisbon and Madrid was only sent once a week. This was another reason why the sending of news-letters from Portugal overland to the Netherlands, and vice versa, took much time. During the seventeenth century a few attempts to establish a direct sea connection between the Dutch Republic and Portugal had failed because they were not profitable enough.⁴⁹

It will be clear that the sending of news accounts from Lisbon to the outside world was interrupted during the first chaotic days after the earthquake. One author sighed – as quoted in the Leiden newspaper – that he had found only one piece of paper, and that with difficulty, so he could not write up a complete story.⁵⁰ However, very soon couriers travelled between Lisbon and Madrid to inform the Spanish court about the situation in Portugal. The king of Spain, Ferdinand VI, appeared to be uneasy and showed great sympathy towards the Portuguese victims, as his sister Mariana Victoria was married to Portugal's king, Joseph I. Ferdinand also sent couriers to Portugal to gather information. This partially explains why the Spanish capital became an important link in

47 In 1738 the *OHC*, for example, had foreign correspondents in Vienna, Paris, Hamburg, London, Rome, Frankfurt, Cologne, Brussels, and Venice. See Dirk H. Couvée, "The Administration of the 'Oprechte Haarlemse Courant' 1738–1742," *Gazette: International Journal of the Science of the Press etc.*, 4 (1958), pp. 91–110, at 103, 106.

48 *OHC* and *RoC*, 27 November 1755. Cf. Saada and Sgard, "Tremblements," p. 212.

49 Overvoorde, *Geschiedenis van het postwezen*, pp. 247–250. He asserts that in 1755, Holland experimented with a connection from England over sea to Lisbon as a temporary solution to high French and Spanish postage costs. Overvoorde does not mention the time of year in which the experiment took place, therefore it is not clear if there is a connection between the experiment and the dissemination of the earthquake news.

50 *LeyC*, 12 December 1755. Longer quote in Dutch: "Ik heb met moeite een blaadje Papier weeten te krygen, om het weinig, 't geen ik schryf te melden; zoo dat, al wilde ik, het onmooglyk zouw zyn een uitvoerig Verhaal te geeven."

the dissemination of the Portuguese news.⁵¹ Furthermore, diplomats and merchants who had survived the catastrophe tried to reach their masters as soon as possible. Many quotations from their letters reached the newspapers, since their content was considered less private than it would be nowadays.

More or less regular connections between Lisbon and other parts of Europe were restored within a few weeks after 1 November 1755. An anonymous letter from Lisbon, dated 11 November, opens with the news that the author had not been able to write earlier as the post had been disturbed until then.⁵² Datelines such as “Belem [the remaining royal residence] near Lisbon, 19 November” also show that postal connections between Portugal and the outside world were being used again during the second half of the month.⁵³ The Utrecht newspaper illustrates this with the fact that the earthquake news was summarized with the help of letters from Madrid prior to the 8 December edition, which included Portuguese news of about one month before. Yet in the subsequent Utrecht edition of 10 December, the editor mentioned that letters written in Lisbon had been received in the Netherlands. He commented, however, that those letters were still very “abrupt,” and so it was not yet possible to make one continuous story. Besides, it is illustrative that the Utrecht newspaper included the heading “Portugal” for the first time after the earthquake news had started, only in its 12 December edition.⁵⁴

In the meantime, Dutch newspaper readers must have observed that the sea route between Portugal and England became important in disseminating news about Lisbon. Many news items about the disaster were received from London and appeared in the Dutch newspapers under the headings “Great Britain” or “England.” The Delft newspaper with the first report about the Lisbon devastations also included a message about earthquakes in Oporto, which had been received in the Downs from a returning ship called Weston.⁵⁵ On 2 December, the Haarlem newspaper mentioned that everybody was very much looking forward to the English letters that had been sent via the packet boat from Lisbon to Falmouth.

A combination of land and sea routes was also possible. A report in the Rotterdam newspaper of 4 December about the situation in Lisbon, published

51 Spanish troops escorted these news couriers after four of them had been murdered by highwaymen in Portugal, where plundering had started after the disaster. *HHC*, 20 December 1755. Cf. Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” pp. 216, 218.

52 *LeyC*, 15 December 1755; also *HHC*, 16 December 1755.

53 *RoC*, 23 December 1755.

54 The first news under the heading “Portugal” in the Amsterdam newspaper was published on 20 December, with the dateline “Belem, not far away from the ruins of Lisbon.”

55 This message was published under the heading “Great Britain.” *HHC*, 27 November 1755.

under “England” and with a London dateline, included news selected from letters posted in Madrid and Paris. In this case the news travelled from Lisbon, via Madrid or Paris, to London, and from London to Rotterdam.⁵⁶ The same account anxiously revealed that the English packet boat that should have left the Lisbon harbour on 2 or 3 November had not arrived with letters from British diplomats and merchants.⁵⁷

Dutch news editors could further rely on information originating from Dutch ships that had returned safely from Lisbon harbour to the Netherlands. On 3 December, for example, the Leiden newspaper published a story about the earthquake, recounted by Cornelis Cornelisz and Hans Piet Mooy, two Dutchmen who had returned to Amsterdam two days earlier. In this case the editor mentioned the names of the authors, which must have given the news report more authority than letters from unknown foreigners. At the same time this ensured everybody knew that both men were out of danger.

Speculation, Reflection, and the Concept of Contemporaneity

Unclear and incomplete news always leads to speculation and uncertainty. This was no different in 1755, when the sudden rise of the water on 1 November could not be immediately explained. People at the time had to be far more patient than today. They were familiar with the idea that rumours could not be researched or confirmed at once. This does not mean, of course, that they did not reflect on and react to unaccountable news items. It is obvious to assume, for instance, that clever newspaper readers in the Netherlands soon connected their own ‘tsunami’ with news that reached the country about the unexpected tidal surges and earthquakes abroad. Yet only slowly – after having read subsequent newspaper issues – would it become clear that their natural phenomenon had its origin in the southwestern part of Europe, as the rise of the water had been noticed in the south of England at 10:30 AM, in the north of the Netherlands around 11:00 AM, and in Baltic harbours at noon. Later news reports about the earthquake in Bordeaux mentioned 10:15 AM, thus earlier than the tidal wave arrived in England and the Netherlands.⁵⁸

56 This sea route is missing on the map of diffusion routes in Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” p. 217.

57 Also *AC*, 4 December 1755.

58 See, e.g., *OGC*, 4, 14, and 18 November 1755; *OHC*, 22 November 1755. See also *HHC*, 2 December 1755, in which the time differences are explained.

Curiosity about the possible explanations for the sudden change of the water level must have been one of the readers' main reactions as long as the real cause of the phenomenon was unclear. Next to the newspaper reports, in which this curiosity was also noticed, this also led to other types of publications with possible answers to people's questions about the phenomenon. Smart editors responded to their readers' curiosity by publishing pamphlets purporting to explain the floods and earthquakes: texts with 'scientific' pretensions and dominant religious ideas as well. The editor of the *Leeuwarder Courant*, Abraham Ferwerda, published such a pamphlet very quickly, which he announced in the Leiden newspaper of 14 November and his own newspaper issue of the 15 November, its long title starting, "Historische en Natuurkundige Aanmerkingen over de zeldzame AARD- en WATER-SCHUDDINGE" [Historical and physical comments about the rare trembling of the earth and the water].

Ferwerda's pamphlet was written by "J.G.M.," initials standing for the Lutheran clergyman Johan Georg Muller, and was for sale in many Dutch cities for the price of five Dutch stivers. The clerical hand is immediately visible in the leaflet's opening sentence, in which the author proclaims that God reminds people of His omnipotence via natural phenomena, in this case an earthquake. After many pages with information about earthquakes, and highly incorrect geological explanations, Muller tries to explain the 1755 trembling of the earth by the winds, the oceans, the geographical peculiarities of the Netherlands, and subterranean water passages with underground disturbances. He frightens the reader with his conclusion that the Dutch soil could suddenly sink into the waters of the sea at any moment, if this is God's will.

According to the editor, Muller's pamphlet was very popular. In Ferwerda's announcement of the third edition, he mentioned that 1500 copies had been sold within a week.⁵⁹ A few weeks after the Lisbon news had become known, the Leeuwarden newspaper announced a pamphlet in which Muller's text was criticized.⁶⁰ This is another indication that the topic was popular. The weight of the godly dimension and religious ideology in people's reflection on the disaster can also be illustrated by Muller's subsequent pamphlet, in which

59 *LC*, 29 November 1755. In the *LC*'s 6 December announcement, the author's full name was revealed. See also *HHC*, 13 December 1755, about Utrecht physicists who tried to explain the earthquake.

60 B.J.M.D. [Bern. Idema, Med. Dr.], *Historische en natuurkundige tegenwerpingen tegens de historische en natuurkundige aanmerkingen over de aard- en waterschuddinge van den 1 november 1755 etc.* (Heerenveen: A. Posthumus, 1755). *LC*, 6 December 1755.

the author used the Lisbon earthquake as a warning and sign that the end of the world was near.⁶¹

During November and December several news pamphlets accompanied the newspapers' accounts, such as the *Beschryving van Lissabon* etc. [Description of Lisbon], published by the Leiden bookseller Hendrik van der Deyster. This publication included an account about the water movements in the Netherlands and the earthquake in Portugal. Another characteristic example is the *Chronykje of naauwkeurige beschryvinge der aard-beevinge, of waterbeweeginge*, etc. [Short chronicle or meticulous report about the earthquake or water movement, etc.]. This small leaflet, printed by Jacobus van Egmont's widow in Amsterdam at the end of 1755, repeated all the news that had been published in the Dutch newspapers about the subject. This shows that the market for news lasted beyond the initial rush to buy corantos and gazettes. After all, it was, of course, easier to reflect on earlier reports that had been published across several newspapers when they were published together in one document. Easy remembering and retrieving of the news would also become possible in the subsequent year when news periodicals, such as the *Europische Mercurius* [European Mercury], summarized the newspapers' accounts.⁶²

Brendan Dooley has asserted that the idea of contemporaneity emerged when international communication networks started to function. He claims that despite:

frequent delays, shifting borders, linguistic barriers, unreliable carriers and differences in the reckoning of time, Europeans began to share a knowledge of one another and of events in the world taking place in the present.⁶³

From the perspective of early modern news, it is interesting to note that this awareness was indeed present in the Dutch newspapers of 1755 that reported on the Lisbon earthquake and tsunami. News reports about the

61 Johan Georg Muller, *Voor-tekenen van de nabyheit van het vergaan der wereld en van den jongsten dag, opgemaakt ter gelegenheit van de vreeszelyke aardbevinge en waterschuddinge te Lissabon, de Nederlanden en elders, voorgesteld ter waarschuwinge en Christelyke toebereidinge* (Leeuwarden: Abraham Ferwerda, 1755), announced in *Lc*, 20 December 1755.

62 *Nederlandsch gedenkboek of Europische Mercurius etc.* 66/2 [July–November] (1755), pp. 285–290, 294–312.

63 Dooley, *Dissemination of News*, p. xiii.

same events reached the Netherlands from various corners of Europe, and Dutch newspaper editors combined their contents. A characteristic observation can be found in the *Hollandsche Historische Courant*, in which the Delft editor observes that the “shaking of the water” was not only mentioned in letters from Friesland, Groningen, and other provinces, but also in Glückstadt, Travemünde, and Portsmouth. He concluded that the circumstances were the same everywhere.⁶⁴

In this case, however, with the Netherlands as a reference point, we have to be aware that the effects of the Lisbon earthquake – the tsunami and its consequences – were noticed and known in a large northern European area weeks before the news about the earthquake was known all over that same area. This means that we still have to distinguish several stages and circles of early modern contemporaneity, dependent on the potential speed of news at the time: first a more or less simultaneously existing and relatively small circle of news readers, who received information about what had happened nearby at the same time and not long after; and afterwards, expanding groups of news readers who did not get the news at the same time because it had not taken place nearby. The question is whether or not those expanding groups can still be considered as one circle of people who shared a feeling of contemporaneity. After all, the larger the area became, the fewer people shared in the experience of reading about the same news simultaneously. It was only after having read such news that people could have a shared memory of the event. In the end, such a memory could be intensified by syntheses of news that were published in pamphlets and news periodicals.

Final Remarks

This chapter deals with the dissemination of news from the south of Europe to the Dutch Republic, half way through the eighteenth century, focused on the subject of the Lisbon earthquake and tsunami of 1755. News about the sudden tidal surges on 1 November 1755 reached Dutch newspaper readers from a

64 Quote in Dutch: “Niet alleen verneemt men ook met brieven uit Vriesland, Groningen en andere provintien deezer republiik, dat diergelyke waterschuddinge aldaar op 't zelve oogenblik meede is bespeurt, maar ook melden die van Gluckstadt, Travemunde, enz. in 't Holsteinsche, alsmeede die van Portsmouth in Engeland; enz., dat men niet zonder verbaastheid aldaar meede die waterbeweeging vernomen heeft, komende de omstandigheeden, die uit alle plaatzen gemeld worden, dewelken dat zonderlinge geval verzelt hebben, alle genoegzaam met elkander overëen.” *HHC*, 13 November 1755.

surrounding area that slowly expanded, depending on the postal infrastructure and means of transport in Europe at the time. Several routes – over land (via Spain, France, and the Southern Netherlands) and by sea (via England or directly from Portugal) – were used to carry news from the earthquake area to the Dutch Republic. Dutch newspaper editors were very eager to publish the earthquake reports as soon as possible, however, they could not confirm rumours easily and to do this they had to rely on uncertain sources. Many news items were copied from other newspapers, with all the mistakes they included.

Another implication of the speed of early modern news carriers was that the Lisbon earthquake was topical for the Dutch about a month after the disaster had taken place. In the meantime they could only speculate about the explanations for what had happened in their own region. This is substantially different from the situation of today, in which we hear world news immediately via all kinds of media. Considering that early modern Europeans did not have so many news channels as we have today, and that their media had to rely on a relatively small supply of news sources (in many countries even state controlled), we may perhaps conclude that their knowledge was based more on common sources than is the case today. However, thorough research has yet to be done to verify this aspect of ‘European contemporaneity’ and to address the question: to what extent were news reports in Europe simply copied from foreign newspapers? This type of research will hopefully become easier when more European newspapers have been digitized.

Appendix

News messages about the earthquake in Madrid in 1755 in Dutch newspapers, with almost the same content and structure, also printed in *La Gazette de Cologne* on 21 November 1755 as follows:

De Madrid, le 3 novembre. Le 1^{er} de ce mois, à 10 heures et 17 ou 18 minutes du matin, nous avons eu ici pendant 4 minutes un violent tremblement de terre, qui a endommagé plusieurs édifices et coûté la vie à 2 enfants écrasés par la chute d’une croix de pierre du frontispice d’une église. On apprend de plusieurs villes des environs, qu’on y en a aussi ressenti les secousses et qu’en particulier elles ont été très vives à l’Escorial, d’où la Cour partit subitement peu après pour revenir ici.⁶⁵

65 Quoted in Saada and Sgard, “Tremblements,” pp. 210–211.

[*From Madrid, 3 November.* The 1st of this month, at 17 or 18 minutes past 10 in the morning, we had a violent trembling of the earth for 4 minutes, which has damaged several buildings and cost the lives of 2 children who have been crushed by the fall of a stone crucifix of a church's frontispiece. It is said in several surrounding cities that people also felt the earthquake shocks, and in particular they were severe in the Escorial, from whence the Court immediately returned here.]

As it took about five days before news from Cologne was printed in Dutch newspapers,⁶⁶ it seems almost impossible that the Dutch newspapers copied the report from the Cologne gazette. They must have had a common source. The *Amsterdamse Courant*, *Leydse Courant*, and *Oprechte Groninger Courant* did not publish this report.

's *Gravenhaegse Courant*, 24 November 1755: MADRID, DEN 3 NOVEMBER. Eergisteren morgen, even over half elf uren [half past ten], heeft men hier een zwaere schudding van een Aerdbeeving gevoeld, waer door veel schade aen verscheyde Huyzen veroorzaekt is, en onder andere zyn twee Kinderen door een steene Kruys, van een onzer Kerken, dat van boven naer beneden storte, verpletterd. Men meend dat deeze Schudding byna overal, dog voornamentlyk op 't Escuriael, gevoeld was, van waer het Hof in alle spoed herwaerts geretourneerd is.

Utrechtse Courant, 24 November 1755: MADRID den 3 November. Eergisteren morgen ten 10 uren en 17 a 18 minuten, had men alhier gedurende 4 minuten een geweldige Aerdbeving, waer door verscheide Gebouwen beschadigt, en 2 Kinderen door het vallen van een Kruis van de Spits van een Kerk verplettert zyn. Uit verscheide naburige Steden verneemt men, dat aldaer die Aerdbeving mede gevoelt, en inzonderheid in't Escuriael zeer hevig geweest is, weshalven het Hof kort 'er na haestig van daer vertrok om herwaerts te keeren.

Rotterdamse Courant, 25 November 1755: MADRID den 3 November. Den 1 deeser 's morgens 17 à 18 Minuten na 10 uren, hebben wy hier geduurende den tyd van 4 Minuten een geweldige Aardbeving gehad, die eenige Huysen beschadigt, en aan 2 Kinderen die het vallen van een Steene Kruys van boven het Frontispice van een Kerk verplettert zyn, het leven gekost heeft. Uyt verscheyde omleggende Steden verneemt men, dat de Schuddingen aldaar ook zyn gevoeld, en dat se vooral te Escuriael seer hevig zyn geweest, van waar het Hof kort daar aan seer subitelyk vertrok, om herwaerts terug te komen.

66 Koopmans, "Supply and Speed," p. 200.

Opreche Haerlemse Courant, 25 November 1755: MADRID den 3 November. Saturdag ochtend ten 10 Uuren en 17 of 18 Minuten hebben wy hier eene sterke Aardbeving gevoeld, welke 4 minuten geduurd, verscheydene Gebouwen beschadigd en twee Kinderen door het afwerpen van een Steenen Kruys van 't Portaal eener Kerk gedood heeft. In verscheydene andere Steden en Plaatsen hieromstreeks is dezelfde insgelyks gevoeld, en wel voornamentlyk in 't Escuriaal van waar het Hof immediaan daarop na deze Residentie terugkeerde.

Hollandsche Historische Courant [Delft], 25 November 1755: MADRID den 3 November. Den eersten deezer 's morgens ten 10 uuren, 17 à 18 min., hebben we hier een zware aardbeving gehad, die 4 minuten geduurt heeft, waardoor verscheide gebouwen beschadigt, en 2 kinderen onder een afgevallen kruis van den voorgevel van een der kerken verplettert zyn, en uit verscheide andere steeden verneemt men, dat men die aardbeving aldaar insgelyks heeft gevoelt, en inzonderheid in 't Escuriaal, verzelt van zware schokkingen in het water.

Leeuwarder Courant, 29 November 1755: Madrid den 3 November Eergisteren morgen om half elf uuren [half past ten], heeft men hier een zware schudding van een Aardbeving gevoeld, waar door veel schade aan verscheide Huizen veroorzaakt is, en onder andere twee Kinderen, door een steene Kruis, van een onzer Kerken, dat van boven na beneden stortte, verplettert. Men verneemt dat deze Schudding byna overal, dog voornamentlyk op't Escuriaal, gevoeld was, van waar het Hof in alle spoed herwaarts geretourneert is.