The voc’s ‘exploration policy’ also had to prevent the leaking of information to potential competitors as far as possible. The limited availability of cartographic information about the Cape Colony when it fell into English hands in 1795 bears testimony to the success of this aspect of the policy. Although the Cape Colony at the end of the eighteenth century was the best-mapped territory outside Europe,¹ English colonial officials complained that the voc had done nothing to put the interior of the colony on the map.² The numerous maps which were drawn especially at the end of the voc period during the administration of one of the last governors, C.J. van de Graaff (1785–1791), had been shipped to the Netherlands.³

None of these maps was published in the eighteenth century. Only a limited number of voc travel journals were printed, with the co-operation of voc officials or other persons at the Cape. François Valentyn published the travel accounts of the journeys by Simon van der Stel (1639–1712) and by the Stellenbosch magistrate Johannes Starrenburg (1677–?) at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indië (1724–1726). The governors Simon and Willem van der Stel (1664–1733) had given him the journals. In 1792 an English translation of the journal of a rescue expedition searching for survivors of the Grosvenor, the English ship wrecked in 1782, was published by Captain Edward Riou. Riou had two copies of the travel journal of the rescue expedition: one sent by the brother of the journal-keeper Van Reenen and the other by governor Van de Graaff, who had sent it to Joseph Banks, the secretary of the Royal Society in London. The scientific significance of these published travel journals varied. The journal of the rescue expedition was published mainly for journalistic

¹ Koeman (1952a).
² Barrow (1801, p. 8).
³ Koeman (1952a). C.J. van de Graaff (1734–1812) was a military engineer with a special interest in cartography and fortifications.
reasons; the wreck of the Grosvenor had given rise to much publicity and speculation about the fate of the survivors, and the journal of the last rescue expedition, in 1791, was able to prove that none of the survivors of the shipwreck was still alive.  

From a scientific point of view the journals of Simon van der Stel’s 1685–1686 expedition and of an expedition headed by “burgher-captain” Hendrik Hop (1716–1771) in 1761–1762 are of greater interest. Both travel journals gave an impression of the north-western parts of southern Africa. Van der Stel had travelled up to Namaqualand, and 76 years later Hendrik Hop even crossed the “Great River” (Orange River) into southern Namibia. Of these two travel accounts, the account of Hop’s expedition in the eighteenth century received the greatest publicity. The report of Van der Stel’s journey was hidden away in Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën, François Valentyn’s opus of five thousand pages on the territory of the voc in Asia; this was never translated in the eighteenth century, and foreign readers’ access to it was therefore limited. The “Dag-verhaal” (daily narrative) of the Hop expedition, drawn up by surveyor Carel Frederik Brink (?–1780) and supplemented with other reports and provided with illustrations, was published by the Amsterdam publisher Schneider in the Nieuwste en beknopte beschijving van de Kaap der Goede-Hope [ . . .] (Latest and concise description of the Cape of Good Hope [ . . .]). Schneider published a French translation at the same time entitled Nouvelle description du Cap de Bonne-Espérance [ . . .]. A German translation appeared in Leipzig in 1779.

The Nieuwste en beknopte beschryving was the first book with new information on the Cape since the appearance of the Journal historique du voyage fait au Cap de Bonne-Espérance by the abbé De la Caille in 1763. For this reason alone the Nieuwste en beknopte beschryving was already significant. In addition, much of the available knowledge about South Africa was included in it. The first part contained a “brief” summary of the existing literature on South Africa. The “Dag-verhaal” in the second part was provided with notes and 12 illustrations in which zoological knowledge on southern Africa had been collected (fig. 14). The

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6 Neue kurzgefasste Beschreibung des Vorgebirges der guten Hoffnung nebst dem Journal eines Landzugs in das Innerste von Afrika durch das Land der grossen und kleinen Namaquas [ . . .] Leipzig, Weygandsche Buchhandlung (1779). In the text below I will always refer to the Dutch edition, the Nieuwste en beknopte beschryving (1778).