CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION TO THE LOG-BOOK OF CAPTAIN
JOHN ANDERSON

Introduction

Captain John Anderson served in the VOC as ‘Pilot-Major’ of a fleet of ships that set sail from the Dutch Republic in December 1640 and returned in July 1643.¹ The destination of the outward journey was Batavia (Jakarta) in the island of Java, the Company’s headquarters in Asia. On this outward journey Anderson piloted the vessel ’s Hertogenbosch.² We know this because a copy of his log-book (in heavily Scotticised English) is now preserved in the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh. Though a copy, completed some time between July 1643 and February 1657, it is nonetheless written directly into a purpose pre-printed Dutch maritime log-book, presumably provided to ensure that transcription (and translation) from the original could be accompanied by the full navigational log-book, presumably provided to ensure that transcription (and translation) from the original could be accompanied by the full navigational notes on the left hand pages (folios verso).³ Many of the left hand pages are blank, however, but on a number navigational directions and measurements are recorded.⁴ Of

¹ The designation of John Anderson as ‘Captain’ is interesting and suggests that he once held the status of a commissioned officer, although in whose service is unclear. For certain he was employed in the VOC for his navigational abilities alone.
² Her departure from the Dutch Republic is recorded in DAS, II, pp. 84–85, no. 0566.3, ’s Hertogenbosch, Kornelis Leendertsz (master). She was 600 lasts, built in 1631 in Delft. She departed from Goeree on 29 December 1640 and arrived in Batavia on 12 May 1641. She carried 216 seamen and 67 soldiers (and presumably 7–8 officers). Anderson’s log contains a minor discrepancy, stating in different places a total number of 289 (fol. 2r, 29 December 1640) and 290 (fol. 17r, 10 May 1641). Since no ports of call are recorded en route and no deaths are reported, the 290 figure can be surmised to have been rounded up, or else Anderson did not include himself in the first count but did in the second. For a brief introduction to the VOC, see Chapter 1.
³ NLS, Adv. MS. 33.3.14, The Voyage of Cap: Jhone: Andersone Pilat Maior of a Fleit of Hollanders to ye orientall Indies wich went out from Halmerslusse in South Holland in Anno 1640. and Returned from thessnce, to ye Flee in ye Mounth of Julay 1643 [hereafter Anderson’s Log]. The log-book measures 312 × 205 mm and appears to be the oldest surviving example of a standardised log using a pre-printed format. See Chapter 3.
⁴ The navigational information is contained on the versos of fols. 1–15, 18–24, 46–51, 54–55, 57–60, and 69–71.
the right hand pages (folios recto), eighty are written on. These pages contain the main text of the journal and record daily events such as land sightings and arrivals and departures alongside coasts, as well as navigational matters. Fuller descriptions of places such as the Cape of Good Hope, Goa, Malabar, Banda and Madagascar are also given, as well as descriptions of indigenous peoples, flora and fauna. It is the main text which has been transcribed for this edition.

From the author’s dedication ‘The Author to the Reider’ we know that, in addition to a circumnavigation of the globe, this particular journey was Anderson’s fourth to the East Indies, and at one point he mentions having passed the Cape of Good Hope in 1618. He was thus an experienced mariner and one of a number of Scots in VOC service. Throughout the seventeenth century Scots can be found engaged in the Company as both soldiers and sailors. Deconinck has calculated numbers of foreigners in the VOC between 1602 and 1660 (see Appendix A). Although Scots were a small proportion of the total number of employees in VOC service, they made a significant contribution to the work of the Company, as Chapter 5 indicates.

The early seventeenth century was an era in which the Portuguese, Dutch and English were vying for control of the spice trade. VOC pilots were required to keep official log-books of their voyages. These were handed over to the Company so that cartographers could update maps and charts with the latest geographical and navigational information (see Chapter 3). As a historical source they are useful in several ways, not least through the events that they describe. Anderson’s log is especially important due to the insights he gives into the military operations conducted against the Portuguese at Goa in 1641–42, for which service he was seconded to the fleet of Admiral Matthijs Hendriksz Quast and served upon the Harderwijk. Sailing along with the ships Hollandia and Egmont, this small fleet made it to Goa by 21 September. They found there a large Portuguese vessel, the Nossa Senhora da Quietação (which Anderson refers to as Santa Maria de Gosta).  

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5 Anderson’s Log, fols. 80r and 11r (22 March 1641).
6 Anderson’s Log, fol. 18r.
7 For the name of the Portuguese carrack Anderson uses the heavily corrupted name Santa Maria de Gosta. George Winius has identified this ship as Nossa Senhora da Quietação: ‘On September 22, 1641, the slower message-bearing ship, the Nossa Senhora da Quietação, Captain de Faria commanding, came lumbering up to the harbor entrance of Goa under a flag of truce, bearing Dutch letters of safe-conduct obtained in Europe. Admiral Hendrik M. Quast, who had received news of the