Grotius often spoke and wrote rather negatively about the legal world in which he moved. In his letters to patrons and men of letters he hinted that he would have preferred to devote himself to literature and history, but it soon became clear that he had an administrative career in his sights. He was busily employed and making his reputation. According to Oldenbarnevelt’s biographer, Grotius was engaged in the proceedings about the colossal Portuguese carrack *Catharina*, which had been captured by Jacob van Heemskerck in the Strait of Singapore on 25 February 1603. The proceedings were brought by the Admiralty of Amsterdam on behalf of the Dutch East India Company, and they sought to have the *Catharina’s* cargo declared prize of war. Grotius is said to have drafted the Admiralty’s claim statement. The same source says that he arranged with Oldenbarnevelt that the States of Holland should cede the right to the prize to the East India Company and Van Heemskerck’s crew. The court record, however, does not suggest that Grotius defended the interests of the East India Company; in fact P.C. Molhuysen showed that Grotius did not even receive essential procedural documents until judgment had already been pronounced. He did give legal advice to the Company, however, and became increasingly involved in its affairs during the years leading up to the Twelve Years Truce (1609–21). His brother Willem also hoped to find a post in the Company’s service, once he was old enough and had acquired sufficient knowledge. In a later letter Grotius refers to his own legal services to the Company in terms which leave no doubt that he had enjoyed a special professional relationship with it. He told Nicolaes van Reigersberch that Frederick

3 See infra, chapter XIV, on Willem de Groot and the office of Pensionary of Delft.
Henry and the Company might well come to his defence: ‘I feel I have deserved so well of the Company that, even if all others slept, they ought to be wide awake for me’.4

Whatever the difficulties, Grotius tried to spare time from his legal work for literary pursuits, and there were many who encouraged him. In late 1604 or early 1605 he was appointed historiographer of Holland. At least, in a letter to Georg Michael Lingelsheim of 7 March 1605 he mentions that he had been appointed by the ‘Ordines’ (the States) to succeed Janus Dousa, who had died on 8 October 1604. The printed and unprinted resolutions5 of the States of Holland say nothing about this appointment. This is a pity because, besides his post as historiographer, Dousa had also been keeper of the charters of Holland, and it cannot be ruled out that Grotius had that post in view as well.6 At any rate Oldenbarnevelt’s influence is evident. Grotius was regarded by outsiders as the great man’s mouthpiece.7 The problem in appreciating the relationship between the young lawyer and the elderly Advocate of Holland is that Oldenbarnevelt held such a dominant position in politics that all Grotius’ political activities were bound to be attributed to his protection.

As a historian and jurist Grotius was the natural choice to write De iure prae-dae (The law of prize or booty). The commission was awarded probably even before he was appointed historiographer, for on 15 October 1604 he was already busy compiling the work,8 which was ready on 1 November 1606.9 It had been commissioned by the Amsterdam Chamber of the East India Company, and contained a plea for the Company’s right to seize as booty at sea the property of nations with which the Republic was at war; that meant not only Spain but also Portugal, the crown of which was in personal union with that of Spain. Grotius himself believed the trade to the Indies to be of vital importance for the Republic and therefore he sought to justify upholding the Dutch presence

5 The Hague, NA, archief van de Staten van Holland, nos. 368–370 and 5282.
6 BW I, no. 62, 7 March 1605: ‘… post mortem domini Dousae … ego ab Ordinibus in eum locum suffectus sum’. Dousa had held the office of historiographer of Holland since 1585.
7 Cf. BW I, no. 69, from S. van Beaumont, 28 November [1605]: ‘… qua es gratia apud Dominum Barneveldium…’.
8 BW I, nos. 53 and 54, from J. ten Grootenhuys, 15 October and [ca. 20 October 1604].
9 On 1 November 1606 (BW I, no. 86) Grotius told Lingelsheim: ‘De rebus Indicis opusculum perfectum est…’.