



Esaias Boursse's 'Tijkenboeck': A Pictorial Catalogue of People Working and Living in and around Colombo, 1662

• LODEWIJK WAGENAAR AND MIEKE BEUMER •

Since 11 November 1996 the Rijksmuseum has held an album containing 116 drawings by Esaias Boursse (1631-1672), which he made in 1662 during his stay in Colombo on the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The existence of this album had been known since 1905, thanks to an article by Wilhelm Bode and Abraham Bredius, who had found the inventory of Esaias's oldest brother Jan's estate in the Amsterdam City Archives.¹ Bredius returned to it ten years later in his source publication 'Künstler-Inventare'.² In an overview of the pictorial material by De Silva and Beumer (1988) that gives an idea of what Ceylon was like under Dutch rule, the authors also refer to the inventory in which Esaias's 'Tijkenboeck' is mentioned, but there was still no trace of the drawings.³ Eight years later, however, the album came to light during an appraisal day organized by Christie's auction house. At that time the authors of this article were asked to carry out exploratory research into the details of lot 128 in sale number 2314 (fig. 1).⁴

An initial inspection soon led to the conclusion that this was a rare opportunity to acquire drawings that give a unique impression of life in and around Colombo in

< Fig. 1
*Esaias Boursse's
Bound 'Tijkenboeck',
drawings made in
Ceylon, 1662.
Brush and Indian ink,
wash, 148 x 196 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. NG-1996-6.*

1662, the year Boursse was in the service of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Ceylon. The importance of his pictorial report outweighs the poor quality of some of the drawings, and in 1996 the Rijksmuseum's Dutch History Department recognized the historical, ethnological and topographical value of the album and managed to save it for the Netherlands. A year later the acquisition was presented to the public with three illustrations in the *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*.⁵ Admittedly, it will not be possible to show the sheets to visitors very often, but modern means do offer a solution. The 'Tijkenboeck', with a detailed explanation, was recently posted on the museum's website so that anyone can browse a unique and very personal report on Colombo and its environs shortly after its capture from the Portuguese in 1656.⁶

A Brief Description of the Album

A page bound into the front of the album bears the handwritten text, 'ik onder geschreven hebbe dit tijken boeck, op Silon getijckent, en verkocht aen mijn broeder tot mijn contentement den 1 Jannewarij 1671/ esias boursse' (I the undersigned have drawn this drawing book in Ceylon

and sold it to my brother to my satisfaction on 1 January 1671/ Esias Boursse). The term 'drawing book' can also be understood to mean a folder of loose drawings. Most of the images were made in Ceylon, as Sri Lanka was called until 1972, while only a few date from his short stay at the Cape of Good Hope. The bound 'Tijkenboeck' contains twenty dissimilar quires, some of which are incomplete. The album now consists of 116 sheets, but at least thirty-four pages have been cut out. There is no way of knowing whether those sheets also contained drawings or where they are now – perhaps they will resurface. The two watermarks in the paper that Boursse used and their position indicate that the size must have been double folio (approx. 44 x 34.5 cm) and that it most probably came from the Low Countries.⁷ Boursse may have brought the pages with him, folded in half, but it is also possible that he got them on the outward voyage in Batavia or during his stay in Ceylon from a VOC employee. In any case it seems clear that he cut the folded double folio pages in half so that he could work on them more easily outdoors. These sheets were made into quires, which were trimmed when they were bound, so in some cases the drawings are no longer complete and pieces of the watermarks have disappeared; we do not know when this happened. The sequence in which Boursse may have made the drawings has been lost in the binding process. On the back of the last page we can see a few clumsy scribbles (NG-1996-6-117) – a later owner's child may have got his or her hands on the album. On one page the word 'oolifant' has been written beside the drawing of an elephant (NG-1996-6-43). In the seventeenth century this animal was invariably called an 'elephant' in Dutch, rather than the modern 'olifant', so it is safe to assume that this addition was made a long time after the drawings passed to Jan Boursse.

The Life of Esaias Boursse

Esaias, born in Amsterdam on 3 March 1631, was the youngest child of Jacques Boursse and Anna de Forest from Wallonia.⁸ Like many emigrants from the Southern Netherlands, his father worked in the textile industry, but he is also recorded as a bookbinder and merchant. Little is known about Boursse's training as a painter. We know that his eldest brother Jan paid for this education and even for a study trip to Italy.⁹ However, it seems that Esaias Boursse could not make a living from his art because in the year that he painted *Interior with a Woman at a Spinning Wheel*,¹⁰ dated '1661' lower left, he joined the VOC as a midshipman – we know this because he made a will as the voyage was likely to be risky.¹¹ Unlike the many who sailed as ordinary seamen or soldiers, he was taken on in a position that offered him the chance of a career in the VOC army. It is not clear what kind of work he found on his arrival in Asia. The *Amersfoort*, the ship that left for Batavia on 13 October 1661, arrived there on 21 May 1662. He must have gone to Ceylon soon after he reached Batavia, but it is unclear what he actually did there. The standard VOC contract was for a period of five years, and no explanation has been found in any sources as to why he was allowed to return to the Netherlands long before the end of his period of service.

He travelled home aboard one of the return ships that left Batavia on 26 December 1662 – possibly even the *Amersfoort*, the vessel he sailed out on.¹² The ship anchored in the roads of the Cape of Good Hope on 17 March for the obligatory stop-over and set sail for the Netherlands on 8 April. On 18 July 1663 Boursse was back in Amsterdam, after an absence of one year, nine months and five days – a remarkably short time. This means he had only spent a few months of his service ashore. Had he found a client, a patron perhaps, who employed

him as an artist to make drawings in the newly won colony? If that is the case, we might discover unexpected work by Boursse or work previously attributed to other artists that can be identified as his. The fact that he was active as a painter again after his return is confirmed by a few dated works he produced, in 1665 and the years that followed.¹³ This sounds like a remarkably short career in the VOC; the only explanation seems to be that he had sailed from Batavia to Ceylon and back and that he made the drawings in the album now in the Rijksmuseum's collection during a short stay there. This is corroborated by the short note in which he personally confirms the sale of the 'tijkenboeck, op silon getijkent' (NG-1996-6-1). Although there is no additional documentary

evidence to confirm that Boursse spent time in Ceylon, he must have been there, because we know of no drawings and prints from which Boursse could have borrowed the details in his drawings (fig. 2).

Boursse was away from the Netherlands for just two years. When he returned, however, his life was not much better than it had been before he left. He was evidently in need of funds when he sold his drawings. Yet again it was his brother Jan who helped him out financially on New Year's Day 1671. Without his further support it was clear that Esaias was unable to make ends meet, because after Jan's death on 9 November 1671, no more money was forthcoming when the need arose. The 'Disaster Year' 1672 – war with England, France and the tiny states

Fig. 2

Note by Esaias Boursse, 'ik onder geschreven hebbe dit/ tijken boeck, op Silon getijkent,/ en verkocht aen mijn broeder/ tot mijn contentement den 1 Jannewarij 1671/ esias boursse', inv. no. NG-1996-6-1.

Ik onder geschreven hebbe dit
tijken boeck, op silon getijkent,
en verkocht aen mijn broeder
tot mijn contentement den
1 Jannewarij 1671
Esias Boursse

of Munster and Cologne – ruined the art trade and artists could not even give their work away. We may assume that it was poverty that compelled Boursse to sign on again with the VOC as many had done before him – and would after him – in order to face up to financial need.¹⁴ On 21 October 1672 he sailed on the *Rhenen* to Ceylon. Less than a month later, on 16 November 1672, he died at sea.

The First Years of Dutch Rule in Ceylon, 1656-62

Around 1590 Portugal was in control of the entire coastal region of Ceylon; only the inland kingdom of Kandy had retained its independence. In 1602 the Dutch commander of the fleet

Joris van Spilbergen met King Vimala Dharma Suriya I (r. 1591-1604), but this initial contact and subsequent visits by Sebald de Weert (1602) and Marcellis de Boshouwer (1612) achieved nothing. In 1636, however, King Raja Sinha II (r. 1635-87) formally requested the Dutch to help to rid the island of the Portuguese. This was a golden opportunity for the VOC and after exhaustive negotiations a treaty was signed in 1638. In the first stage of the war four forts were captured, Batticaloa (1638) and Trincomalee (1639) in the east, Galle (1640) and Negombo (1640, and again in 1644) in the west. After the last conquest the fight had to be discontinued because Portugal had severed its union with Spain (1580-1640) and had made a truce with the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands, but due to the machinations of the VOC that treaty did not become valid in Asia until 1644. The *status quo* was advantageous for the Company, because it gave the VOC control of areas to the north and south of Colombo which meant it was able to contract the members of the Salagama caste to peel cinnamon – the *raison d'être* for the VOC's presence in Ceylon (fig. 3).

When the fighting in Brazil flared up again in 1654 and Portugal retook the sugar producing area they had lost to the Dutch twenty years before, the VOC resumed the fight against the Portuguese in Ceylon.¹⁵ The situation looked good because thirty kilometres or so to the north of the Portuguese capital of Colombo the VOC was in firm control of the fort at Negombo and on 15 October 1655 it captured Kalutara, forty kilometres to the south of Colombo. An effective blockade of the coast by the VOC prevented Portuguese reinforcements from landing, but in spite of that the Portuguese garrison in Colombo resisted a siege for seven months, until 12 May 1656. The prolonged bombardment had 'many buildings, even whole streets, reduced to heaps of rubble', wrote Wouter Schouten

Fig. 3
Map of Ceylon,
situation c. 1638-65,
Armand Haye.





Fig. 4

JOHANNES KIP,
The Town of Colombo,
in Wouter Schouten,
Oost-Indische
Voyagie: Vervattende
voornamen voorvallen
en bloedige zee- en
landtgevechten tegen

de Portugeezen en
Makassaren 1658-65,
vol. 1, Amsterdam:
Jacob van Meurs,
1676, after p. 184.
Amsterdam, Rijks-
museum Research
Library, 322 D 6.

Fig. 5

JOHANNES
VINGBOONS, *Bird's-
Eye View of Colombo*
(detail), c. 1665.
Coloured drawing,
45 x 63 cm.
The Hague,
National Archives,
inv. no. VELH 0619.155.

(fig. 4).¹⁶ Pieter van Dam, Company Secretary of the VOC, recorded that after the town had been captured it was turned upside down during the rule of the governor Rijcklof van Goens (g. 1662-63, 1665-75) and rebuilt from the ground up, as a contemporary bird's-eye map seems to show (fig. 5).¹⁷

In 1659 the Dutch began work on the large-scale restoration of the old Portuguese defensive works and reducing the size of the town. First, the walls were provisionally reinforced with primitive palisades made of the trunks of coconut palms. The work was done by soldiers and town residents, aided by natives made prisoners of war in Jaffna and Eurasian mercenaries.¹⁸ We see little of the devastation or the rebuilding works in the drawings Boursse made in the town itself. At any rate his scene of the church of St Francis and the adjoining Franciscan monastery gives no indication of it





(fig. 6; NG-1996-6-65).¹⁹ The first building was used as the governor's residence and the second served as a *materiaalhuis* – a combined arsenal and workshop.

Another drawing, 'People in the Street' (NG-1996-6-27) shows a damaged building in the background. We do not know where it was, but the ruin could have been in the neighbourhood indicated on another map as 'Een bergh in de stadt liggent' (a mountain in the town), in the middle of the district that would later be known as 'Castle'.²⁰ The mountain can be seen in a drawing of the *Cidade d'Colombo* (fig. 7). In Boursse's drawing 'A Group of People at a Well' (fig. 8; NG-1996-6-25) there is a vague image of a dilapidated building in the background, but in his drawings

Boursse shows no clear interest in the structural condition of Colombo.

We can actually see the rebuilding indirectly, in the many illustrations Boursse made of workmen involved in the reconstruction of Colombo's fortifications. They are usually shown with their large baskets, pickaxes and spades, and each time we see them taking a break from their arduous toil, probably at the artist's request. By the time Esaias Boursse arrived in 1662 the plan to reduce the size of the wall around Colombo had proved impossible. In 1657 it had been decided to make do with a smaller garrison.²¹ The walled part would then house the offices, warehouses and dwellings for the senior officials, but the fortifications of the residential district would have to be demolished – in an emer-

Fig. 6
Cityscape with
People at the
Former Franciscan
Monastery,
inv. no. NG-1996-6-65.



Fig. 7
Cidade d'Colombo, drawing in the manuscript by Constantino de Sá de Miranda, Biblioteca General de la Universidad de Zaragoza, M. 13, folio 3r. The church of 'S[ão] Francisco' is indicated next to the mountain.

gency the population would be able to find protection in the heavily fortified 'Castle'. However, the implementation of these plans was moving at a snail's pace: 'There was still not much progress in reducing the size of the town of Colombo because of the lack of lime and a workforce,' reported Batavia on 16 January 1660. In the meantime, the relationship with Kandy had deteriorated to such an extent that an enemy attack had to be feared. The official report continues: 'so it was thought a good idea to rebuild three of the old bulwarks and bring them to an appropriate defensive condition, and leave the other work for the time being'.²³ From a missive from Batavia nearly three years later – 26 December 1662 – it turns out that the work was still dragging on, although in that year

the south side of the 'Castle' had been 'defended adequately' and 'they were laying the foundation of a new bastion called Candia' – the name suggests that the relationship with the inland kingdom of Kandy had improved.²³ Although the precise locations cannot be determined it looks as if the labourers in Boursse's drawings were working on the repair and reconstruction of Colombo's ramparts (figs. 9, 10; NG-1996-6-41, 95). The plan to reduce the defence works was resumed in 1685, but the work was not completed until 1698 – when Colombo consisted of two parts, the reinforced 'Castle' and the newly built residential district, without walls.²⁴





Fig. 8
A Group of People
at the Well,
inv. no. NG-1996-6-25.

Fig. 9
Two Labourers
from South India,
inv. no. NG-1996-6-41.

Fig. 10
Six Female Workers
with their Baskets,
inv. no. NG-1996-6-95.

Background of the Workforce

From their appearance, a few of the workers depicted were enslaved Africans who had been brought to Ceylon by the Portuguese rulers prior to 1656. Article 7 of the treaty of surrender stipulated that all the Portuguese government possessions on the island had to be handed over to the VOC, including the slaves. The latter condition was a matter of survival as the work on the fortifications required many hands, and soldiers were only prepared pick up spades in an emergency and for extra pay. After the capture of Jaffna in 1658 many prisoners of war, South Indian and Eurasian mercenaries or *tupasses*,²⁵ were sent to Colombo to work as convicts; a few years later slaves from South India were also imported for this work.

The truce with Portugal in 1644 and the eventual peace after 1658 had led to a great conflict between the VOC and Kandy. The king forced

the Singhalese inhabitants of the area conquered by the VOC to leave and go to Kandy. The VOC then found itself in a position where it had to import thousands of slaves and indentured labourers from South India to work the paddy fields and perform other vital tasks – some of them assigned to the crews restoring the fortifications. The inhabitants who had fled during the violence gradually returned, but in 1662 most of the Singhalese from the neighbouring countryside still remained in Kandy by order of Raja Sinha II.²⁶

It is not easy to make out what is in the background of the drawings of the workers. The labourers from South India and Jaffna can often be identified from their minimal dress: a simple piece of fabric as a loincloth and another around the shoulders and head. Many viewers will recognize the garb of Mahatma Gandhi, which he wore to draw attention to the poor Indians of



Fig. 11
Two Men with
Bamboo Poles,
inv. no. NG-1996-6-76.

Fig. 12
A Man, a Woman
and a Small Boy
Inside a House,
inv. no. NG-1969-6-79.

Fig. 13
A Singhalese Soldier
(Lascharin) Resting,
inv. no. NG-1996-6-5.

the lowest caste. We must therefore exercise caution in our interpretation of the drawings, although it is sometimes possible to make an assumption: ‘Two Men with Bamboo Poles’, for example, may show two workmen of Portuguese-Asian parentage – both of them probably from Jaffna (fig. 11; NG-1996-6-76). In quite a few of the drawings, labourers from different ethnic origins are shown together; a few of them even depict people from three different backgrounds: Africa, South India and Jaffna (NG-1996-6-14 to 16).

Meetings Inside and Outside the Town

During his short stay, Bourse evidently had the opportunity to roam freely and explore Colombo and its surroundings. He took a great deal of time to draw people in all sorts of places, indoors and out (fig. 12; NG-1996-6-79).

He was clearly very interested in what they wore, or more specifically in the way loincloths and other fabrics were draped around their bodies and the effect of light on them, and in the things they carried with them. Historians are not initially occupied with such items, but three and a half centuries later the information they provide is fascinating. In one of the drawings, for instance (fig. 13; NG-1996-6-5), we see a man lying on a bench outdoors. A short sword (*kastane*) hangs from his left hip. This weapon identifies the man as a *lascharin*.²⁷ Bourse encountered two other *lascharins* elsewhere, but it is not clear where he drew them (NG-1996-6-22). In 1661 there were 774 *lascharins* in the district of Colombo; an unknown number of them were employed to stand guard at the four *gravetten*, the sentry posts that monitored the access to the town.²⁸







Fig. 14
Two Singhalese
Farmers,
inv. no. NG-1996-6-28.

Fig. 15
A Singhalese Soldier
(Lascarin) and a
Squatting Labourer,
inv. no. NG-1996-6-24.

Fig. 16
A Singhalese Chief
Officer (Mudaliyar)
Sitting on a Bench,
inv. no. NG-1996-6-69.

Most of them, however, worked in the countryside, as overseers, and to take letters written by the VOC from one place to another. In recompense for their services they were given farmland – the agricultural labourers in the drawings NG-1996-6-28 to 30 are probably *lascarins* or their sons who worked in the paddy fields (fig. 14; NG-1996-6-28). In a couple of drawings there are *lascarins* depicted with labourers (NG-1996-6-24 (fig. 15) and NG-1996-6-61) and this could mean that they were overseers of the various gangs of workmen who had been employed to restore the fortifications. On two occasions Boursse also drew their superiors, the *mudaliyars* (NG-1996-6-69 (fig. 16) and NG-1996-6-70).²⁹ They are identified by the medallion hanging on a double chain around their shoulders: people given the authority by the 'Lord of the Land', the VOC. They also always carried a short sword, a *kastane*.

Portuguese Colombo was a generously laid-out town with many open spaces. This situation could still be recognized in Boursse's drawings a couple of years after its capture. The scene with the well (fig. 8) is good evidence of this. We see an almost rural environment with a dilapidated wall of a building or a part of the fortifications in the background on the right – the well was inside the town walls. In a rustic setting there is a similar drawing with an entrance to a yard and a large barn in the foreground (NG-1996-6-87). The atmosphere is identical in a drawing made by Boursse while he was walking down an unpaved street with some buildings of the left and right (fig. 17; NG-1996-6-27). Most of the houses are roofed with woven leaves from coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*), but the one with the large window on the first floor has a roof made of the typical Mediterranean pantiles that had been made on

the coast on the instructions of the Portuguese since the sixteenth century. The Dutch just left them like that. Six years later the building in the background still shows the result of the months-long bombardment (from October 1655 to May 1656).

What did Boursse Intend with his Drawings?

Esaias Boursse said nothing about his drawings, so we do not know what he could have been intending to do with them. All but a couple of sheets, for example those with the drawings of elephants (NG-1996-6-43, 56) and a swamp crocodile (NG-1996-6-47), do not fit in the tradition of book illustrations at that time. Those mostly show special events or important persons or places, for example the meeting in 1602 between Vimala Dharma Suriya I, the king of Kandy, and Joris van Spilbergen.³⁰ Battles, heroes, forts and churches

were also worth depicting, as we can see in the images in the book by Philippus Baldaeus.³¹ In the work of another of Boursse's contemporaries, Wouter Schouten,³² we also see entirely different illustrations: shipwrecks, naval battles, the annual procession of the king of Arakan and, staying closer to home, various scenes that give an impression of Batavia.³³ Boursse's drawings do not in any way satisfy the requirements of the publishers at that time. He made entirely personal depictions of the inhabitants that he happened to come across in the streets or outside Colombo. The individual approach is also unusual, compared to the work of his contemporary Andries Beeckman, who portrayed the people he met in and around Batavia around 1655-60 far more as 'types'.³⁴ Boursse was intrigued by the garb of the ordinary workers – men and women, such as road workers and porters:

Fig. 17
People in the
Street in Colombo,
inv. no. NG-1996-6-27.



no fewer than forty-four drawings are devoted to these people.³⁵ His preoccupation with the clothes they wore suggests that he particularly wanted to get the hang of drawing the folds of the material. Unlike his paintings,³⁶ which in terms of style and subjects can be compared to the work of Pieter de Hooch, Boursse's drawings do not fit in with a specific tradition, nor do they show any similarity to the work of his contemporaries. This is why we do not endorse the remark in the acquisitions article of the *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* that Boursse's drawing can be compared to the work of Albert Eeckhout, Frans Post and Zacharius Wagenaar.³⁷ This also applies to another suggestion that the illustrations in the travelogue by the German VOC soldier Albrecht Herport are indebted to Boursse's drawings.³⁸ Like Boursse, Herport was in Colombo for a short time in 1662 and so he could have seen and drawn the same people.

We do not know whether Boursse offered his drawings to publishers as illustrations, but they would most probably not have wanted to use his atypical depictions. Might Boursse simply have made them as practice? Perhaps he was even planning to work up his drawings, often no more than sketches, into paintings. If that was the case, nothing ever came of it, for there is no known work of this kind by him.

None of Esaias Boursse's drawings have captions, which means that interpreting them is not easy. However, a few aspects stand out. Firstly, he saw people from different backgrounds, some came from far and wide and others had been born in and around Colombo. Secondly, the labourers worked hard – it is not possible to see exactly what they were doing, but it is clear that they were moving earth. Thirdly, we see representatives of the Eurasian community created in the Portuguese colonial period, members of various Singhalese

groups and finally European employees of the Company. One group is notably absent – the Muslims, called *Moors* by VOC employees. In 1659 Muslim traders and their families had been ordered to move to a specific number of locations on the coast, outside the large towns. The purpose was to restrict and monitor their trade because the VOC feared them as competitors.³⁹ Boursse only captured them in one drawing (NG-1996-6-52).⁴⁰

We can easily understand the historical context of many of Boursse's drawings in conjunction with literary and non-literary sources from the period around 1662. However, the study of the same sources teaches us what and who do not feature in Esaias Boursse's surviving drawings. They give us a captivating but incomplete picture (fig. 18; NG-1996-6-116). It does not alter the fact, though, that Boursse left an eyewitness report of a dynamic moment in Sri Lankan history, an important visual component of a past which is mainly known to us from documentary sources.



Fig. 18
*Scene with a Party
 in a Tavern or
 Living Room,*
 inv. no. NG-1996-6-116.

ABSTRACT

We do not know who trained Esaias Boursse (1631-1672) to be a painter, but we do know that he became a member of the Amsterdam Guild of St Luke around 1651. He certainly did not have a successful career because he joined the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1661. He travelled to Colombo, the capital of the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka since 1972), captured six years earlier by the Portuguese, by way of Batavia (now Jakarta). In 1663 he was back in Amsterdam – remarkable, as the standard contract with the VOC was for five years. In financial straits again, he re-joined the VOC in 1671 and left for Asia. Shortly after leaving he died at sea. In 1996 an album containing 116 drawings came to light, most of them made by Boursse during his time in Ceylon; he made only a small number during his outward or return journeys to the Cape of Good Hope. The drawings are completely different from his earlier known oeuvre of genre paintings and prints with religious themes. The pages in his 'Tijkenboek' provide a unique picture of what Boursse saw in and around Colombo. They are important evidence of the early days of the VOC in its conquered colony of Ceylon.

NOTES

- 1 Wilhelm Bode and Abraham Bredius, 'Esaïas Boursse, ein Schüler Rembrandts', *Jahrbuch der königlich-preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 26 (1905), pp. 205-14, esp. p. 209: inventory drawn up after the death of Jan Boursse, 24 November 1671, by the notary J. de Winter in Amsterdam, including 'Een kunstigh teyckeninghboeck van de Indische Natien op Ceylon gedaen door Esaïas Boursse nae't leven' and a separate drawing of 'Cabo de bona Esperanza' by Esaïas Boursse.
- 2 Abraham Bredius, *Künstler-Inventare. Urkunden zur Geschichte der Holländischen Kunst des xviten, xviiiten und xviiiiten Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1, The Hague 1915, p. 122.
- 3 R.K. de Silva and W.G.M. Beumer, *Illustrations and Views of Dutch Ceylon, 1602-1796*, London/Leiden 1988, p. 477.
- 4 *Dutch, Flemish and German Old Master Drawings*, sale cat. Amsterdam (Christie's), 11 November 1996, sale 2314, no. 128, pp. 74-77.
- 5 'Keuze uit de aanwinsten', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 45 (1997), no. 1, pp. 70-72.
- 6 Album containing 116 drawings, mainly of people, made in Ceylon, inv. no. NG-1996-6, consultable on the website: <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl>. The descriptions of the 116 drawings were made by the authors of this article.
- 7 All but two of the drawings were made on paper with the Arms of Amsterdam watermark. The countermarks have mostly been lost when the sheets were trimmed later. An 'L' is just visible on the bottom edge of sheet NG-1996-6-92. The Foolscap watermark can be identified in the paper of the first section – with the handwritten dedication (NG-1996-6-1) – and in the double sheet with two drawings made in South Africa (NG-1996-6-98 and NG-1996-6-103).
- 8 For Esaïas Boursse's biography see Clotilde Brière-Misme, 'Un "Intimiste" hollandais Esaïas Boursse 1631-1672', *Oud Holland* 69 (1954), no. 1, pp. 18-30; Tom van der Molen, *Esaïas Boursse (1631-1672): Een Amsterdamse genreschilder in zijn tijd*, Art History Master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2006.
- 9 This is evident from his mother's favouring her eldest son Jan in her will dated 23 July 1658, drawn up not long before her death. The argument was that Jan had gone to great expense, specifically for Esaïas 'int leeren ende oeffenen vande schilderkonst, alsmeede desselfs reijse nae Italien' (for his learning and practising painting, as well as his trip to Italy). See Bredius 1915 (note 2), pp. 120-26; Esaïas Boursse, esp. p. 124. Quoted by Van der Molen 2006 (note 8), p. 10.
- 10 Esaïas Boursse, *Interior with a Woman at a Spinning Wheel*, 1661. Oil on canvas, 60 x 49 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-767.
- 11 Amsterdam City Archives, acc. no. 5075 Notarial Archives, no. 120 Jan Hendrickz Leuven, inv. no. 2736A: transcripts of protocols, fols. 420-21: will of Esaïas Boursse, 15 Sept. 1661, note 37, Van der Molen 2006 (note 8), p. 11.
- 12 The Hague, National Archives, acc. no. 1.04.02 (VOC), inv. no. 4932: appendix 1603-1701, pp. 50 and 52. See also www.vocsite.nl/schepen. The *Amersfoort* lay at anchor off the Cape of Good Hope from 17 March to 8 April 1663. Boursse made several drawings during his visit to the Cape (NG-1996-6-83, 98 and 103).
- 13 The painting *Kitchen Interior with a Woman and a Boy*, 1665 (signed and dated), oil on canvas, 61 x 73 cm, was sold on 24 November 1986 by Sotheby's Mak van Waay. Whereabouts unknown. Van der Molen 2006 (note 8), p. 69.
- 14 Marten Jan Bok, 'European Artists in the Service of the Dutch East India Company', in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North (eds.), *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*, Amsterdam 2014, pp. 177-204.
- 15 Between 1630 and 1654 the Netherlands occupied a part of the Portuguese colony of Brazil ('Nieuw Holland'), specifically the Pernambuco region where there were many sugar plantations.
- 16 'veel gebouwen, ja zelfs hele straten [waren] in puinhopen veranderd'. Wouter Schouten describes the situation he encountered in 1661: 'Terwijl wij nog voor Colombo lagen, hadden wij iedere dag gelegenheid om deze oude beroemde stad te bezichtigen. Door ouderdom, zware belegeringen en oorlogen waren veel gebouwen, ja zelfs hele straten in puinhopen veranderd en een groot aantal was met struikgewas overwoekerd. Toch waren er in de stad nog veel mooie gebouwen, fraaie kerken, ruime straten en wandelwegen overgebleven. De huizen waren op Portugese wijze ruim, luchtig en hoog, en geheel van steen opgestrooken, alsof ze voor de eeuwigheid gebouwd waren.' (While we still lay before Colombo, we had the opportunity every day to see this famous old town. Age, heavy sieges and wars had reduced many buildings, even whole streets, to heaps of rubble and a

- large number had become overgrown with bushes. Nevertheless, there were still many beautiful buildings in the town, fine churches, wide streets and footpaths that had survived. The houses were spacious, airy and tall in the Portuguese style and entirely built of stone, as if they had been built for eternity.) Michael Breet (ed.), *De Oost-Indische voyagie van Wouter Schouten*, Zutphen 2003, p. 185.
- 17 Pieter van Dam, *Beschryvinge van de Oost-Indische Compagnie* (ed. F.W. Stapel), The Hague 1932, vol. 2, part 11, pp. 351ff. Though Vingboons drew the town plan of Colombo in 1665, it is uncertain which period is depicted here (fig. 5). He may have used a Portuguese source showing the situation before the devastating siege of 1656.
- 18 Remco Raben, *Batavia and Colombo: The Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities, 1600-1800*, Doctoral thesis, Leiden University, 1996, p. 23.
- 19 In the foreground we can see a man with a hat, dressed in knickerbockers, armed with a sword. The men on and alongside the steps are also European VOC employees, possibly soldiers.
- 20 Johan van Nessel, *Aenwysingh der voornaemste Plaetsen der Belaegerden Stadt Colombo, hoe de werken by den E. Heer Dir. Gerit Hulft S: voor de Stadt met Aprochen en Bat: Aeng: bracht syn, en hoe de Stadt met all haer Punten, Bolwerken En voornaemst: Plaetsen genaemt syn geweest. Anno Christi 1656, den 12 May veroveret*. Coloured drawing, 97 x 139 cm. The Hague, National Archives, inv. no. 4.VEL 942. In the key to the symbols the reference is numbered 29.
- 21 *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oost-indische Compagnie (GM)*, vol. 3, missive from a letter of 31 January 1657, p. 127.
- 22 'Mette afsnijdinge van de Stadt Colombo en was noch niet veel gevordert, soo mits het gebreck van kalck als van arbeytsvolck; soo was goet gevonden drij der oude bolwercken weder op te maecten ende in behoerlijcke defentie te brengen ende het ander werck soo langhe te laeten staen.' *GM* 3, p. 295, missive from 16 January 1660.
- 23 'waeren [sij] nu doende mettet leggen van 't fondament van de nieuwe punt, genoemt Candia' *GM* 3, p. 446, missive from 26 December 1662.
- 24 For a detailed description of the building activities in Colombo after its capture, and of the new structure of the town, see Raben 1996 (note 18), pp. 23-33. The demolition of the walls of the Old Town was a lengthy process. It was not until 1733 that the last remains were removed, according to Raben on p. 29, referring to the map in The Hague, National Archives, 4. VEL 952. On the side of the Lacq (or 'Lake', the present-day much smaller Beira Lake) a small part of the town was abandoned and left to fill with water. After this first and in-complete stage of reduction, the perimeter was nevertheless still around four kilometres. Because a soldier was required to be positioned on average every linear rod (approx. 3.76 m) it needed 1,600 musketeers, gunners and native soldiers, the *lascarins*. See R.L. Brohier and J.H.O. Paulusz, *Land, Maps and Survey: Descriptive Catalogue of Historical Maps in the Surveyor General's Office, Colombo*, Colombo 1951, vol. 2, pp. 68-69.
- 25 *Tupas*: literally 'someone who speaks two languages', but in general someone from South India and North Sri Lanka who had adjusted to the culture of the Portuguese colonizers. This group of *tupases* also included people of Portuguese-Asian parentage, often descendants of freed slaves, who were called *Mardijkers* in Batavia and elsewhere in the Indonesian archipelago.
- 26 In 1662 there were only 7,125 residents in the entire district of Colombo, from Bentota to the south to Negombo to the north of the capital. See Raben 1996 (note 18), pp. 102-03.
- 27 Ceylon was a caste society. Within the main caste of the *goyigama* (farmers) there was a group which comprised soldiers, security guards and bearers of official letters. This situation had already existed in the former Portuguese areas, where they were called *lascarins*.
- 28 The 774 *lascarins* are described in the 'Instructie voor de Dessave van Colombo, 21 June 1661, bill no. 62, article 5, in Lodewijk Hovy, *Ceylonees plakkaatboek: Plakkat en andere wetten uitgevaardigd door het Nederlands bestuur op Ceylon, 1638-1796*, Hilversum 1996, p. 68. See also Raben 1996 (note 18), pp. 226-27.
- 29 *Mudaliyar*: military head of a number of units (*ranchuwa*) of *lascarins*. The standard unit comprised twenty-four men, under the command of a sergeant (*arachi*) and two corporals (*kangani*).
- 30 The meeting is depicted in an anonymous print in 't *Historiael Journael*, Delft 1605 (Maritime Museum, Rotterdam, sign. WAE 2 A 50). See Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'Uitwisseling van staatsie-

- portretten op Ceylon in 1602', in Lodewijk Wagenaar (ed.), *Aan de overkant: Ontmoetingen in dienst van de VOC en WIC (1600-1800)*, Leiden 2015, pp. 165-97.
- 31 See the example in the Rijksmuseum, in which all the prints were coloured at the time they were made, inv. no. NG-1008: Philippus Baldaeus, *Naauwkeurige beschryvinge van Malabar en Choromandel, der zelve aangrenzende ryken, en het machtige eyland Ceylon: nevens een omstandige en grondigh doorzochte ontdekking en wederlegginge van de afgoderye der Oost-Indische heydenen ...*, 3 vols., Amsterdam: Johannes Janssonius van Waesberge and Johannes van Someren, 1672. The second volume is relevant here: *Beschryvinge van het machtige eyland Ceylon ...*
- 32 *Wouter Schoutens Oost-Indische voyagie*, Amsterdam: Jacob Meurs and Johannes van Someren, 1676.
- 33 For the illustrations of Batavia, see Bea Brommer et al., 'Wouter Schouten's Drawings of Batavia: 1658-64', *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 65 (2017), no. 3, pp. 300-10.
- 34 See the figures portrayed in the painting by Andries Beeckman, *The Castle of Batavia, Seen from Kali Besar West*, c. 1661. Oil on canvas, 108 x 151.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-19. In the Rijksmuseum's collection there are a number of drawings copied after Beeckman, such as 'a warrior from Ternate' (NG-2016-37-16) and 'a Chinese craftsman with parasol and razor', which look a lot like the border decorations with exotic figures we know of from seventeenth-century wall maps.
- 35 His interest in the way loincloths were folded and other garments were worn is also evident from a large number of other drawings, for example those of the wet nurses (5), women with children (8), Eurasian and Singhalese women with their loose-fitting blouses introduced by the Portuguese (40), and the Singhalese soldiers (9) and officers (2) – all told, these account for more than half of the drawings.
- 36 See Van der Molen 2006 (note 8), and also Brière-Misme 1954 (note 8), no. 2, p. 72; no. 3, pp. 162-63. The prints attributed to Boursse in the Rijksmuseum's collection are not described here – these, too, differ considerably in quality from the drawings in the 'Tijkenboek'. See Esaias Boursse (attributed), *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*, c. 1645-65. Etching and drypoint, 98 x 135 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-B1-4224.
- 37 'Keuze uit de aanwinsten' 1997 (note 5), p. 72.
- 38 Renée A.M. Spierings, *Naar het leven: De totstandkoming van representaties van niet-Europese volken in de illustraties van vroegmoderne reisverslagen*, Cultural History Master's thesis, Radboud University Nijmegen, 2010. Renée Spierings discussed the comparison between Boursse's work and Herport's in her paper 'Seeing Ceylon: The Construction of Visual Representations in the Works of Esaias Boursse (1661-1669) and Albrecht Herport (1669)', at the (third) Encompass Conference 'The Rise of Asia's Maritime Frontiers Old and New Regimes at the Interface of Coast and Interior, c. 1650-1720', Colombo, 15-17 August 2011, organized by the Leiden University.
- 39 Hovy 1996 (note 28), bill 50 of 14 October 1659, p. 70.
- 40 At least thirty-four pages have been cut out of the bound album. It is therefore not out of the question that Boursse drew more representatives from the group of Muslims.