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Dierick Ruiters's Manuscript Maps and the Birth of the Dutch Atlantic

MICHIEL VAN GROESEN 


ABSTRACT: In 1621, as the Twelve Years' Truce drew to a close, the Dutch West India Company was founded with the explicit brief to open a second front in the war with the Habsburg monarchy and to attack Spanish settlements in the Americas. The Zeeland skipper Dierick Ruiters was one of the key figures in the embryonic phase of the Dutch Atlantic empire. Throughout the 1620s he presented the directors of the West India Company with crucial geographical and military intelligence in the form of five manuscript maps of strategic positions in the Habsburg empire. This article analyses the military value of these five little-known maps which facilitated the Dutch attack on Spanish strongholds along the coast of South America. Ruiters's maps were initially kept secret but gradually reached a wider audience in the form of published news maps. Because Ruiters was never mentioned as the draftsman responsible for these maps, however, and reputations in cartography and colonial history alike in later centuries have depended on the availability of maps for a wider audience, his name has been all but forgotten by scholars of the Atlantic world.

KEYWORDS: Dierick Ruiters, Dutch West India Company, intelligence, Brazil, Venezuela, Chile.

In marked contrast to early modern Spanish and Portuguese expansion in the Western hemisphere, which was shrouded in secrecy and censorship, Dutch expansion in the Atlantic world was characterized by openness. Its newspapers, prints, pamphlets, cosmographies and (occasionally famous) maps are ample testimony to both the young republic's boundless self-confidence during the so-called Dutch Golden Age and the open discussion culture at home that many foreign visitors admired or at times despised.¹ Before a 'public' Atlantic world first appeared and then flourished at the waterfronts and printing houses of Amsterdam and other maritime towns of the United Provinces, however, the Dutch West India Company was also reluctant to publicize sensitive information. Sources of

espionage and strategic intelligence that made the emergence of the Dutch Atlantic possible remained hidden from public view, which explains why they have hitherto received relatively little scholarly attention.²

In this article, five manuscript maps by the Zeeland navigator Dierick Ruiters (c.1575–c.1640), which played a crucial role in the making of the short-lived Dutch Atlantic empire that thrived in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, are examined.³ The exploration of Ruiters's manuscript maps, moreover, reveals the sometimes rather blurred line between secrecy and openness that defined the early strategy of the West India Company and that in later centuries determined the boundary between obscurity and (relative) fame.

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The Dutch in South America

Dutch mapping of the Atlantic world preceded Dutch imperial ambitions by several decades. The Iberian monarchies had been fairly successful in keeping cartographic information about the Americas secret, but the Union of the Crowns (1580) ignited Luso-Spanish disagreement about the geopolitical purpose of overseas maps and the level of concealment required. Repeated English and French incursions into South America made geographical secrecy an 'increasingly futile exercise', as one historian has put it.⁴ As early as September 1592, the Amsterdam globemaker Jacob Florisz van Langren confidently claimed that Dutch merchant ships had reached Pernambuco in Brazil with the aid of his globe.⁵

Throughout the 1590s, individual trading voyages yielded more maps of coastlines and port towns in the Americas, most notably sketches of the West Indian island of Trinidad and the Wild Coast (modern-day Guyana) by the Rotterdam skipper Pieter Cornelisz van Petten.⁶ Major publications of Atlantic navigation, like Lucas Jansz Waghenauer's *Enchuyser Zee-caert-boeck* (1598), reported the latitude of several locations in Brazil and added brief descriptions of the transoceanic routes from the Canary Islands to South America, and from the West African coast to northeastern Brazil. Around the turn of the century, cartographers of the so-called North Holland school of cartography, such as Evert Gijsbertsz, Cornelis Doedsz, and the brothers Harmen and Marten Jansz—all from the small maritime town of Edam—provided the first overviews of the Atlantic world. Cornelis Claesz, the Amsterdam publisher, was a crucial figure in disseminating the most recent achievements of the cartographic workshops in the towns of North Holland.⁷

Because the projected establishment of the West India Company was suspended in 1606 during Dutch negotiations with Spain over what would become the Twelve Years' Truce, the early mapping of the Atlantic world did not immediately lead to geopolitical endeavours. After 1614, however, when both Habsburg Spain and the Dutch East India Company (VOC) began regularly to violate the Truce in Asia, Dutch skippers in the Atlantic Ocean also became more outright in their ambitions. In January 1615, the privateer Joris van Spilbergen—during a voyage of circumnavigation in the service of the VOC—burned down a sugar mill in São Vicente, near the village of Santos in southern Brazil.⁸ The following year,

in 1616, the Dutch skipper Samuel Lucas lost a ship in a skirmish with Portuguese colonists near Belém at the mouth of the Amazon River, a feat that was still being referred to on maps of the region made many years later.⁹

In May 1617, the VOC pleaded with the States General in The Hague to order the Amsterdam Admiralty to prepare a warship that could be sent to Brazil or to the West Indies to take Iberian captives. This, according to the directors of the Company, would be the only way to make the Habsburgs agree to a long-awaited exchange of hostages.¹⁰ By the time the West India Company was finally established in 1621, Dutch sailors were prepared to take the war against Spain to the Americas.

Dierick Ruiters

Dierick Ruiters, born in Zeeland probably around 1575, was a sailor and skipper who spent his entire career in Atlantic waters. He was one of the first Dutchmen to visit West Africa and to write about his experiences there; his chapter on the Bight of Benin was included in the most influential early account of trade along the Gold Coast, Pieter de Marees's *Description and Historical Account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea*, published in Amsterdam in 1602.¹¹ At some point in the next fifteen years, Ruiters turned his attention to Brazil.

It was at Angra dos Reis in the vicinity of Rio de Janeiro that, as captain of the ship *De Blauwe Zeeu* [The Blue Zeelander], Ruiters was arrested in the autumn of 1616 for conducting trade, something that was not allowed under the stipulations of the truce between the United Provinces and Habsburg Spain. For thirty months, he remained a prisoner in Brazil, forced to 'wander with the Portuguese in chains or tied with ropes, sometimes quite freely on ships along the coast'.¹² He eventually escaped—or so he claimed—and returned to Zeeland in 1619.

In reaction to his 'miserable detention', Ruiters published *Toortse der Zee-vaert* [1623; 'Torch of Navigation'], a pilot guide that was to the Atlantic what Jan Huygen van Linschoten's more illustrious *Itinerario* of 1596 had been to the Indian Ocean. Partly based on the Portuguese navigator Manuel de Figueiredo's *roteiros*, Ruiters's navigation manual served a clear patriotic purpose and became the blueprint for the first invasion of Brazil by the Dutch West India Company in May 1624, a campaign in which Ruiters himself participated.¹³

The Dutch held on to Salvador de Bahia, the capital of Habsburg Brazil, for only eleven months, but in February 1630 they returned to Pernambuco, where the town of Recife formed the nucleus of a flourishing Dutch Atlantic empire for almost twenty-five years.¹⁴

Ruiters's *Toortse der Zee-vaert* does not, surprisingly perhaps for a pilot guide, include any maps (Fig. 1). It does, however, contain an explicit reference to them. In the dedicatory letter to Stadtholder Maurits of Orange, dated 20 May 1623, Ruiters expressed the hope that many of

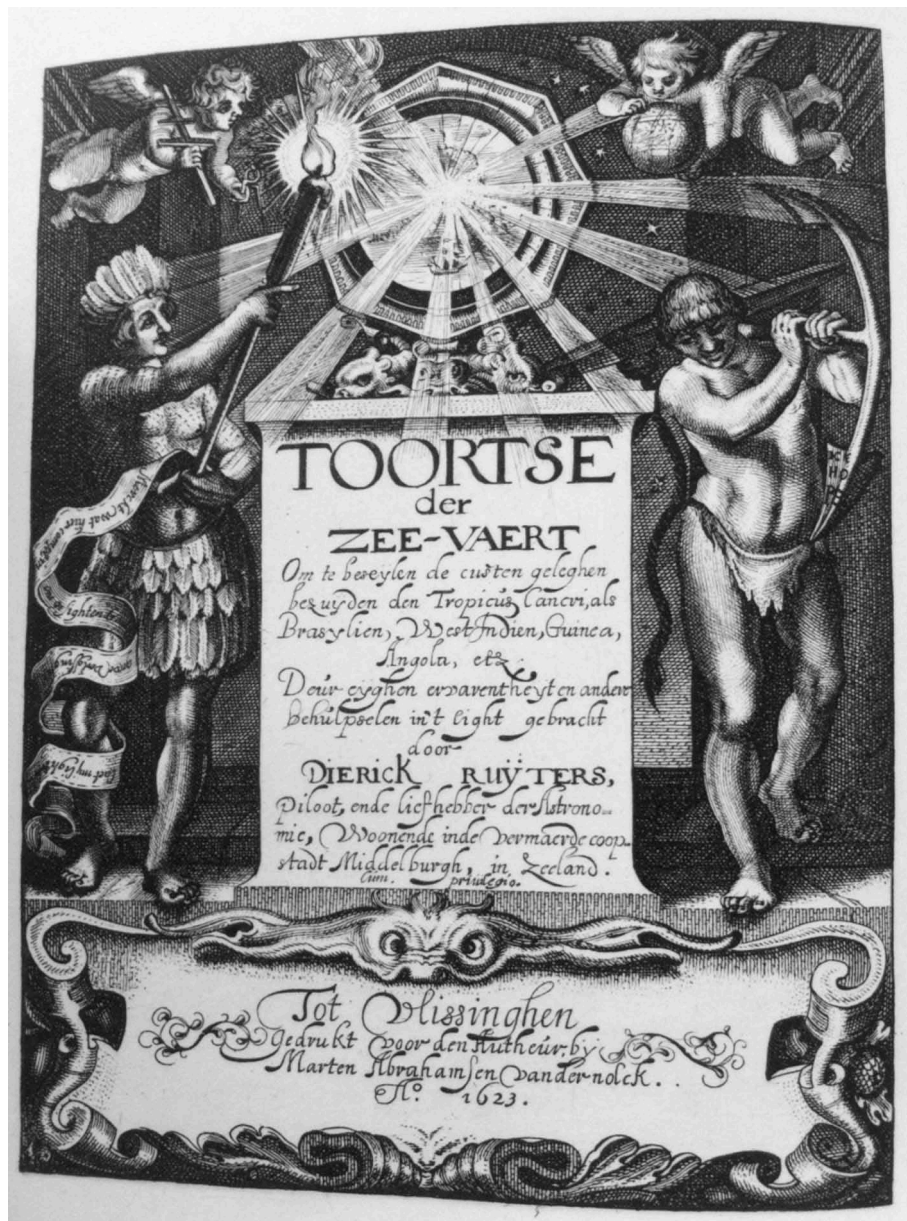


Fig. 1. Dierick Ruiters, *Toortse der Zee-vaert* (Vlissingen, 1623). The title-page to Ruiters's navigation manual to the Atlantic world depicts a stereotypical American (left) and African man. The native American holds the torch to which the title refers—the torch being a common metaphor for pilot guides such as this one. The text on the banderol held by the native American is a Protestant verse referring to Providence's guiding light, visually represented by the rays at the top. University of Amsterdam, Special Collections, O 60-815. (Reproduced with permission from University of Amsterdam.)

the prince's subjects would purchase his work, 'causing me to publish a second edition, to which many things can be added, and which can be furnished with all the plates of the same countries, which I have already skilfully designed'.¹⁵ Although *Toortse der Zee-vaert* was an important work in these early years, it was not until 1648, well after Ruiters's death, that a second edition appeared from the workshop of Jacob Aertsz Colom in Amsterdam.

Despite Colom's shining reputation as a publisher of navigation manuals and maritime cartography, the second edition of the *Toortse* contained no maps either.¹⁶ Once the Dutch lost Brazil to the Portuguese in 1654, and the West India Company's empire had begun to disintegrate, the first Dutch pilot guide to the Atlantic world gradually lost its relevance. In 1662, Colom changed the date on the title-page but not the contents, a typical publisher's ploy to make an outdated book look new, and thirty years later his heirs did the same thing again. Evidently Ruiters's pilot guide had been surpassed by other similar works, and the Colom workshop had a hard time selling its remaining copies.¹⁷ Crucially, for our purposes, neither the 1662 nor the 1692 'editions' contained the maps Ruiters had promised to future readers in his original dedication.

Ruiters's Maps

So what happened to Ruiters's maps of the Dutch Atlantic world? The answer is that early on they had become separated from the book; five survive in the National Archives in The Hague, preserved among other maps of the Atlantic world, but in a different section of the archive from the papers of the West India Company where the rest of the story of Ruiters's maritime fortunes can be found. This unfortunate separation, created in the late 1860s by the archivist Pieter Arend Leupe, can be seen as symptomatic for the enduring lack of cross-pollination between colonial history and cartography in Dutch scholarship.¹⁸

In what follows I shall discuss Ruiters's maps one by one, and explore their value as sources of intelligence for the West India Company. In doing so, I shall demonstrate that some of Ruiters's maps, despite being kept secret by the authorities, ultimately did reach a wider public interested in Dutch progress in the Western hemisphere, one of the most important political storylines of the Dutch Golden Age. Since, however, publishers with an eye for commercial gains subsequently

presented the maps as their own, the name of Ruiters has never been connected to what eventually became canonical images of the short-lived Dutch contribution to Atlantic history.

Each of the five maps Ruiters made in the 1620s, all pen drawings, represents a different geographical area (Fig. 2). Three of them focus on Brazil: Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara Bay in the south, Salvador de Bahia and the Bay of All Saints further north, and the coastline of what is now the state of Pernambuco around Olinda and Recife. The other two show Punta de Araya on the north coast of Venezuela, and Valdivia with its Corral Bay in southern Chile.¹⁹ Only the last, an outlier in several respects, carries a date: 1627. All of them are signed, usually with Ruiters's name in full (*Dierick Ruuyters fecit*) but sometimes with only the monogram *D.R.* They are all virtually the same size: the three Brazilian maps and the map of Punta de Araya vary in height from 29 to 31 centimetres, and in width from 42 to 44 centimetres, suggesting that they may have indeed been meant for publication. The map of Valdivia, almost certainly made later, is slightly bigger, measuring 31 by 47 centimetres.



Fig. 2. The main places in South America mapped by Dierick Ruiters. (D. Bove.)

The three Brazilian maps and the Punta de Araya map each contain an elaborate handwritten legend indicating the most important buildings and (mainly) defensive structures in the respective areas. The text on the Valdivia map is written in the margins as well as on the map itself. The sometimes rather peculiar (or even incorrect) way of spelling geographical names, such as ‘Rio Popitangi’ for a small stream on the map of Pernambuco, corresponds to toponyms used in *Toortse der Zee-Vaert*.²⁰ The same is true for the idiosyncratic way (in Dutch) of referring to the Portuguese as ‘Portugijsen’ (with a ‘ij’ instead of an ‘e’), both on the maps and throughout the *Toortse*, which further strengthens the connection between the manuscript maps and Ruiters’s pilot guide.

Several other maps in the same ‘Leupe collection’ (4.VEL) of the National Archives at first glance look similar to this set of five. They lack, however, the particulars discussed above, have different (relative) measurements, and do not contain Ruiters’s signature. They should therefore not be attributed to the Zeeland pioneer.²¹

The three Brazilian maps in particular have been noted by scholars of Dutch expansion since the nineteenth century, although they have never been widely known. In 1846, the Zeeland historian Edelhard Swalue reported finding several maps by ‘a certain De Ruyters’ as part of his efforts to write a patriotic regional history of Zeeland’s contribution to the war against Spain. Two years later, an anonymous historian referred to Swalue’s discovery and explicitly mentioned a manuscript map of Tobago, which he connected to the author of *Toortse der Zee-vaert*, but which I have not been able to trace.²² Then, in April 1855, the prominent Dutch map collector Johannes Tiberius Bodel Nijenhuis had his draftsman Jacob Cornelis Wendel make copies of the three Brazilian maps in the National Archives, which can still be consulted in Leiden’s University Library.²³

In the edition of Ruiters’s *Toortse* that was made by Samuel Pierre L’Honoré Naber and printed by the *Linschoten-Vereeniging* [Linschoten-Society] in 1913, however, no mention was made of any of the five maps in the National Archives. One of the maps resurfaced only in a small book written by the Brazilian ambassador to The Hague, Joaquim de Sousa-Leão, in 1957.²⁴ Even Kees Zandvliet in his exhaustive and exemplary study *Mapping for Money* (1998) and Günter Schilder in his nine-volume *Monumenta Cartographica Neerlandica* made hardly any reference to Dierick Ruiters’s efforts as a

cartographer although each included one of his manuscript maps.²⁵ It was only in the *Comprehensive Atlas of the Dutch West India Company*, compiled by Bea Brommer and Henk den Heijer in 2011, that the five maps are found within a single publication, albeit separately, in different regional chapters.²⁶

Just how Ruiters was able to take notes or make sketches of the surroundings in Habsburg Brazil after having been captured is unclear. The maps offer preciously few details regarding his methods, even when they are compared to the relevant text in *Toortse der Zee-vaert*. What is evident is that Ruiters was by no means the most gifted cartographer of his generation. The value of the manuscript maps lies almost exclusively in the military intelligence they represent. Fortresses, city walls and a detailed patchwork of shallow and navigable waters characterize the drawings. The maps of Salvador de Bahia and Rio de Janeiro are the most detailed of the five, suggesting that Ruiters designed these two from his own observations (Figs. 3 and 4). This corresponds to the information we have on Ruiters’s detainment in Brazil, as well as to the text of the *Toortse*, which seems to confirm his presence in Rio and Salvador, but not in Pernambuco.²⁷ Intriguingly, Ruiters made special mention on the maps of Rio and Salvador of the local prison (‘t *gevangen huijs*), which suggests he may have spent considerable time there.

Map of Salvador

Ruiters’s pen drawing of Salvador, the capital of Habsburg Brazil, is arguably the single most important map in the early history of the West India Company (see Fig. 3). It became available precisely at the time when the directors of the newly founded joint-stock enterprise were making plans for their first campaign in the Atlantic world, the so-called *Groot Desseyn* [Grand Design].²⁸ Drawn from a north-westerly viewpoint, the map captures the city on the horizon as it overlooks the Bay of All Saints. At the top of the sheet, Ruiters explains that the perspective is skewed because in reality ships in the distance are smaller than those depicted here, but this, he claimed, was done to emphasize ‘demonstration rather than artfulness (perspective)’.²⁹

The legend of twenty-five letters explains the location of several islands in the bay—some labelled ‘sugar-rich’—and the main buildings in Salvador, with a strong emphasis on those housing the various religious orders and fortifications. The map is a little ambiguous as regards the city walls. In *Toortse der Zee-vaert*, Ruiters notes that the town is unwalled, and

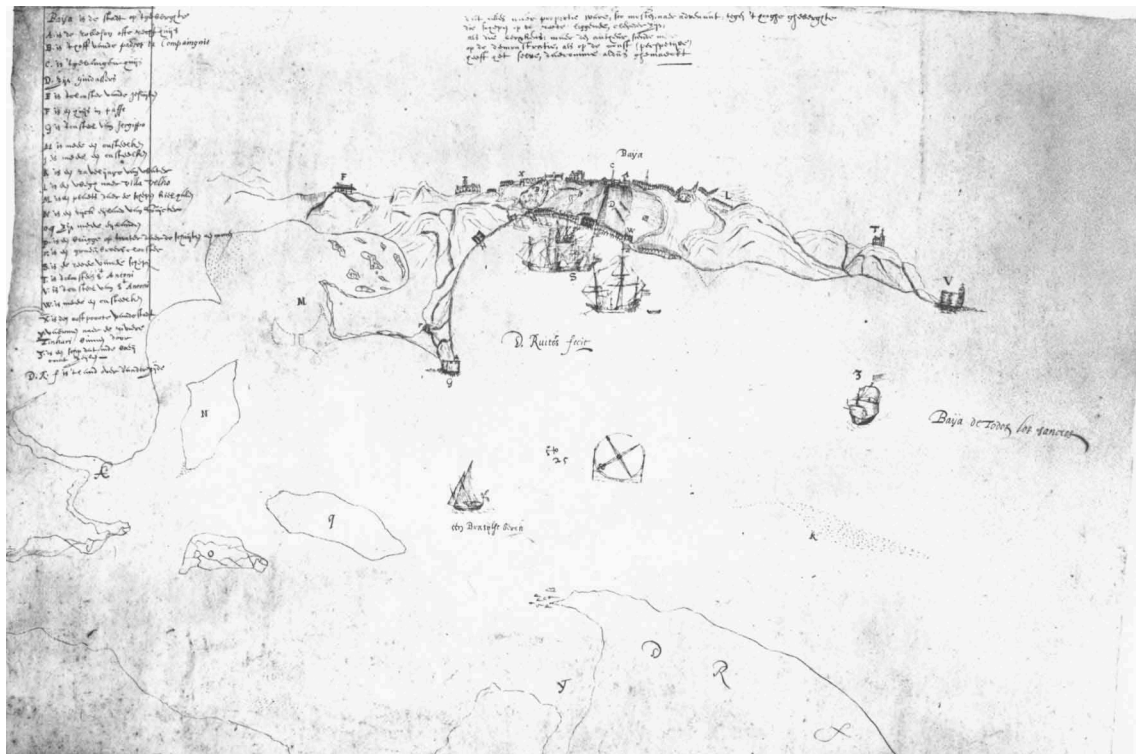


Fig. 3. Dierick Ruiters, Manuscript map of Salvador and the Bay of All Saints, Brazil, c.1620? 29 × 42 cm. North is to the bottom left. In a lengthy explanation at the top, Ruiters explains that the proportions are not correct, but that he made the map like this for practical purposes. Selected places on the map, including castles and administrative buildings, are explained in the legend on the left. The Brazilian boat (*Een Brasijlse berck*) in the centre of the composition is a rare ethnographic detail. Nationaal Archief, 4 VEL 717. (Reproduced with permission from Nationaal Archief, The Hague.)

none are shown on the map, but a letter X indicates the eastern gate of the city, suggesting there was at least some sort of barrier or enclosing palisade.³⁰ Most importantly, and in contrast to what the Dutch invasion force would experience in May 1624, the map does not depict the *Forte do Mar*, the defensive structure at the heart of the bay which was probably constructed around 1620.³¹

On the eve of the first Dutch fleet's departure to Brazil, the *Heeren XIX* (the Nineteen Gentlemen, as the directors of the West India Company were dubbed) placed considerable trust in Ruiters's information. In September 1623, they asked the Zeeland skipper to assess the potential of the daring plan launched by Admiral Boudewijn Hendricksz to attack Spain in the Caribbean. The projected campaign would be executed in 1625 as a follow-up to the first 'Grand Design', but in November 1623, Ruiters attended a directors' meeting and offered both his services and his book, *Toortse der Zee-Vaert*, to the directors. They decided to return the six copies of the pilot guide Ruiters had given them, however, ordering that

any director wishing to read it should buy it for himself.³² But they regarded the *Toortse* as *bequaem*, a useful book and hired Ruiters to take part in the expedition to Salvador de Bahia that duly departed in December 1623 and to serve as a local guide for the troops aiming to take the city. At no point during the exchanges between Ruiters and the West India Company, at least according to the limited sources which survive, were the maps of Salvador and the other two Brazilian locations mentioned.

When news of the successful invasion of Salvador reached Holland in the final week of August 1624, however, the West India Company directors decided to change their policy of secrecy for one of openness. They ordered the Amsterdam publisher of prints, Claes Jansz. Visscher, to design a so-called news map reporting the successful campaign and provided him with Ruiters's map of the Bay of All Saints to create a credible design (Fig. 5). Visscher's map appeared a mere five days after news of the successful invasion had reached Amsterdam. Pressed for time, the

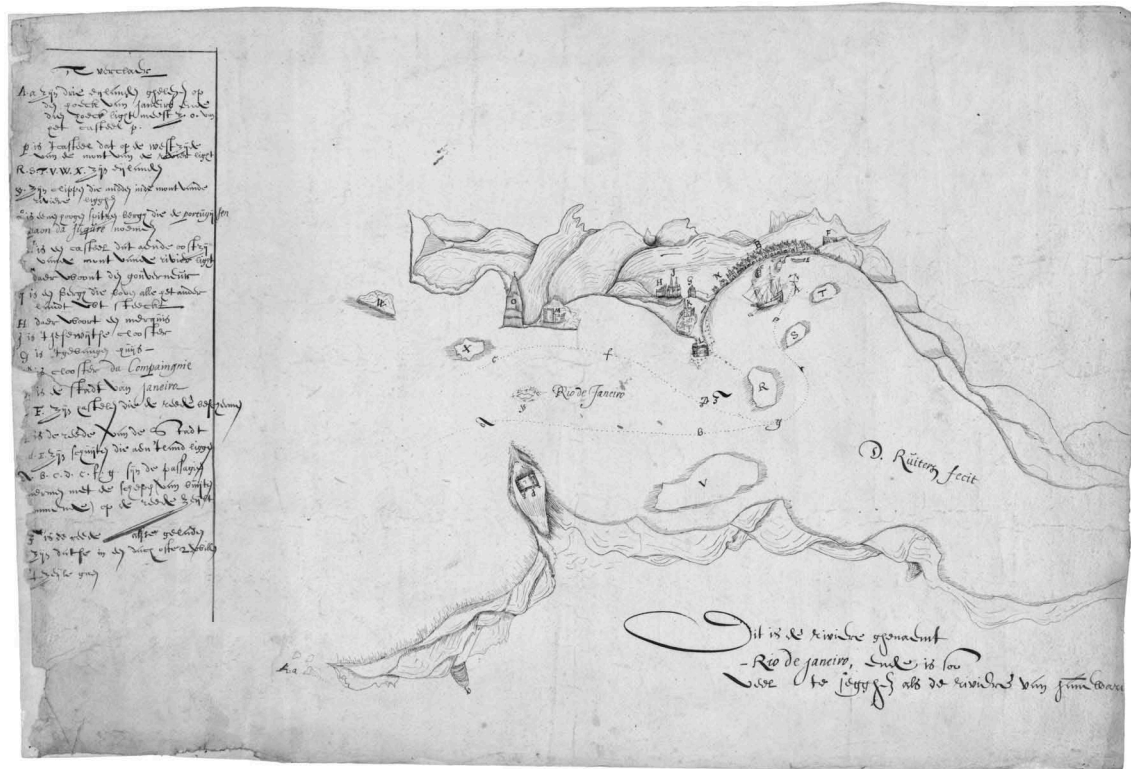


Fig. 4. Dierick Ruiters, Manuscript map of Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara Bay, Brazil, c.1620? 30 × 43 cm. North is to the right but not indicated by Ruiters. At the bottom right, Ruiters explains that 'This is the river named *Rio de Janeiro*, meaning the river of January' [Dit is de riviere genaemt *Rio de Janeiro*, ende is soo veel te segghen als de riviere van januwarj]. Selected places on the map, mainly fortifications and islands, are identified in the legend (*T verclaeer*) on the left. Nationaal Archief, 4 VEL 724. (Reproduced with permission from Nationaal Archief, The Hague.)

publisher must have benefited from having Ruiters's drawing (or a copy of it) ready to hand.³³

At first glance, the perspective and the most relevant details of the coastline are similar, although Visscher had dramatized Ruiters's representation by making the entry to the Bay of All Saints look more narrow and suitable for defensive crossfire (and hence more perilous for the invading fleet) than implied by Ruiters, who had portrayed the two main Portuguese fortifications realistically as too far apart to damage enemy vessels simultaneously.³⁴ Dierick Ruiters's name was not mentioned in Visscher's corporate propaganda, but that his sketch served as Visscher's model is reflected from several features.

To start with, most references in the news map's legend allude to different stages of the invasion, but seven of the twenty-two numbers refer to landmarks singled out by Ruiters, including the prison that played no role in the attack. The lay-out of the footpaths between the lower and upper parts of the city is nearly identical in the two maps. And both maps show the cranes the colonists employed to

haul commodities from the anchorage at the bottom of the steep cliff uphill to the town, although where Ruiters used the word *gindassers* (derived from *guindaste* = crane, Port.), Visscher had *windasen*, a different yet infinitely more intelligible word for a Dutch readership. Despite the constant copying of Visscher's news map in the Dutch Republic and more generally in Europe, its original source was never acknowledged and the connection with Ruiters never made.³⁵

Map of Rio de Janeiro and Guanabara Bay

In April 1625, the West India Company surrendered Salvador to a combined Luso-Spanish armada.³⁶ The defeat put a temporary check on Dutch territorial ambitions in the Atlantic world, and Ruiters's other detailed manuscript map, that of Rio de Janeiro with its great bay, would never be used in the same way as his map of Salvador had been (see Fig. 4). Although the sketch of Rio de Janeiro, which combines an orthodox plan perspective with a navigator's view of the city, must

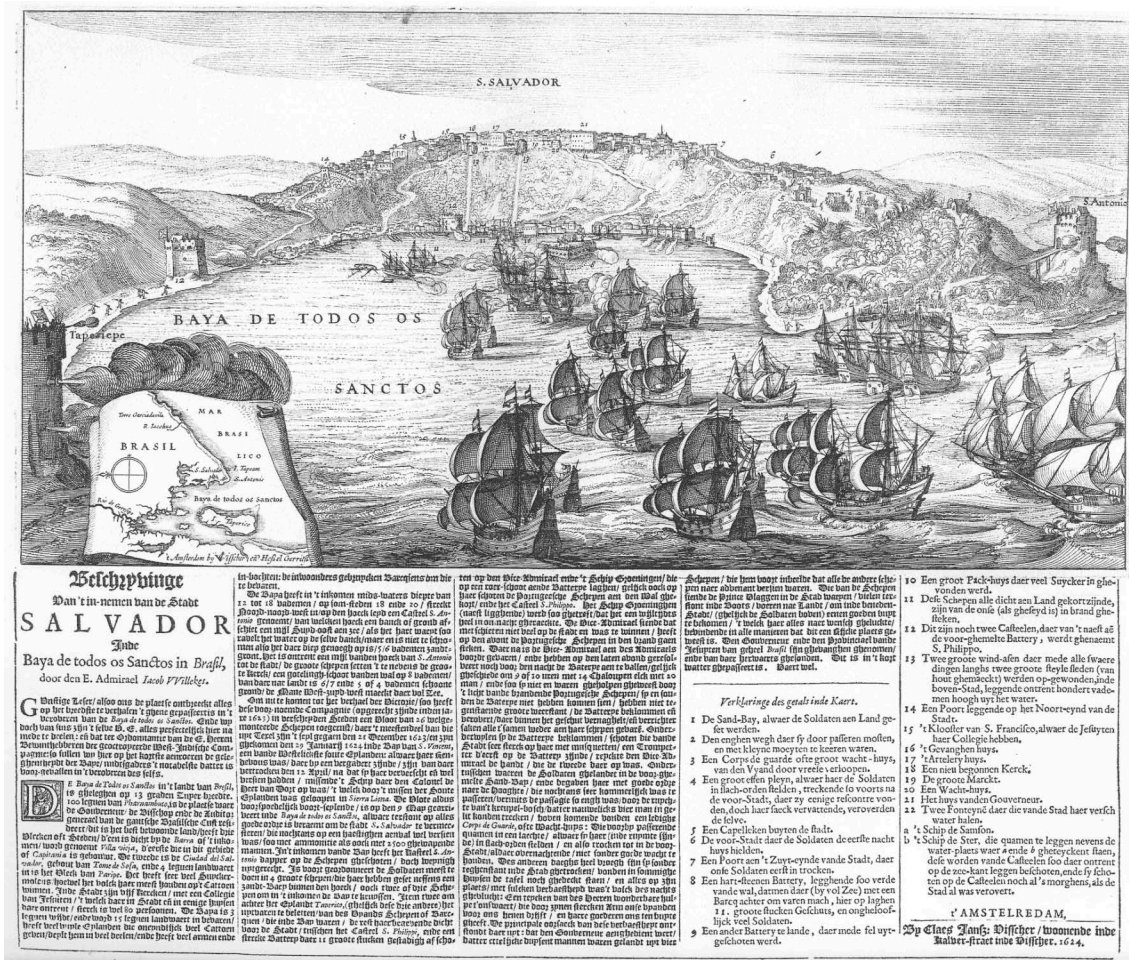


Fig. 5. Claes Jansz. Visscher, *Beschryvinghe van 't in-nemen van de Stadt Salvador inde Baya de Todos os Sanctos in Brasil* (Amsterdam, 1624), 33.6 × 39.5 cm. North is to the bottom left. Copper engraving loosely based on Ruiters's sketch, with the purpose of depicting the Dutch invasion of Bay of All Saints' as dramatic and grandiose. At the beginning of the text, Visscher explains that the text is 'commissioned by the directors of the West India Company' ('ter Ordonnantie van de E. Heeren Bewinthebbers der geotroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie'). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB 79.371. (Reproduced with permission from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)

have retained its value as a source of information for at least some years, a Dutch attack on Rio never materialized, and as a result Ruiters's map gradually lost its geopolitical urgency in the minds of the West India Company directors.³⁷

Map of Punta de Araya, Venezuela

The second half of the 1620s saw the Dutch engaged in mapping the Atlantic world in anticipation of a series of attacks that were certain to follow elsewhere in the western Atlantic. While the archives of the West India Company have been much reduced, a number of manuscript maps have survived as testimony to the increasing interest by the

Dutch to expand their knowledge of the Atlantic world. As regards the coasts of South America, their cartographical aims were modest and little was required in terms of codification of the mapped information since admirals and ships' captains sailing from the United Provinces to South America and the Caribbean were called upon by the directors to verify the geographical reliability of maps made in Amsterdam by the likes of Claes Jansz Visscher.³⁸

Ruiters probably joined Hendrik Jacobsz Lucifer's voyage to the Amazon region late in 1625. This expedition was to connect with a group of Zeeland pioneers already on the coast of Guyana, and to merge with Admiral Boudewijn Hendricksz's Caribbean fleet, about which Ruiters had been

consulted two years before. Ruiters's map of Punta de Araya, east of Caracas, was made in the course of this voyage and needs to be considered in the context of the Dutch collective (albeit somewhat haphazard) effort to map as many strategic locations in the Atlantic world as possible.³⁹

Punta de Araya, known in the early modern period for its extensive salt pans, had been a regular destination for Dutch ships since the Spanish embargoes of the late 1590s deprived them of access to salt from Setubal, Portugal.⁴⁰ Already, before the Truce, Spanish galleons had been driving the Dutch away from Punta de Araya and had strengthened their positions. After 1621, the West India Company ventured to reconnoitre the salt pans and spy on the adjacent Spanish fortress in order to assess the current state of affairs.⁴¹

In *Toortse der Zee-vaert*, Ruiters had dealt with Punta de Araya only succinctly, mentioning trade along the north Venezuelan coast in a brief survey of Spanish interests in the Caribbean and emphasizing only the pearl trade.⁴² He made no mention of

Spanish defensive structures, presumably because he had not yet visited Punta de Araya. His subsequent manuscript map, which can be dated early 1625, is strikingly similar in style to the three earlier Brazilian maps (Fig. 6). This time, the written explanation is in the bottom-right corner, but otherwise clearly resembles the legends of the Bahia and Rio maps. The perspective, though, is unorthodox. The coastline of Cumana, which parallels that of the long headland of Punta de Araya, is drawn on the right side of the sheet on a different scale, and oriented to have north on the left instead of at the bottom to match the main map. Some of the geographical features are decidedly inaccurate, but once again accuracy was not the main objective of the drawing.

Like his three Brazilian maps, Ruiters's map of Punta de Araya served a clear military purpose, as it reserved special mention for the Spanish fortresses on the mainland that protected the salt pans, and on Isla Margarita, a small and vulnerable island just off the Venezuelan coast. On Margarita, Ruiters depicted a watchtower that was destroyed in an attack by

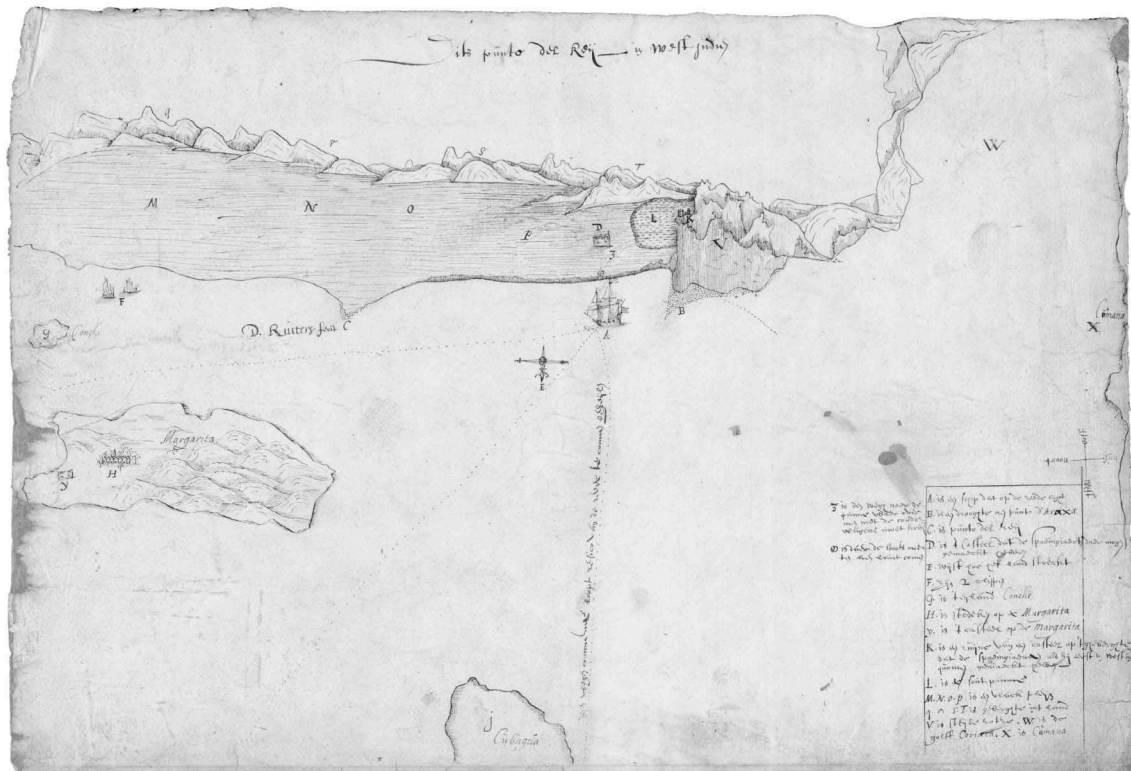


Fig. 6. Dierick Ruiters, Manuscript map of Punta de Araya, Venezuela, 1625? 30 × 44 cm. North is at the bottom. Ruiters calls the peninsula of Punta de Araya 'Punto del Rey' in the short title at the top. Selected places on the map, including islands, salt pans and fortifications, are explained in the legend on the right. On the right-hand side of the sheet, a second map detailing the coast line at Cumana, on the Venezuelan mainland, is added, with north to the left. Nationaal Archief, 4 VEL 580 (Reproduced with permission from Nationaal Archief, The Hague).

Boudewijn Hendricksz in February 1626.⁴³ Ruiters's map once again provided crucial intelligence in the build-up to the attack on Habsburg positions.

Map of Valdivia and Corral Bay, Chile

Ruiters's manuscript map of Valdivia and Corral Bay in Chile cannot be connected to any of the Zeeland skipper's voyages, and almost certainly was not the result of his personal observation (Fig. 7). It is dated 1627, a year in which there were no Dutch expeditions to the Pacific coast of South America through the Strait of Magellan or Strait le Maire, or around Cape Horn. The disastrous 'Nassau Fleet', which had rounded Cape Horn in 1623 and sailed north along the Chilean coast,

returned to the United Provinces in the summer of 1626 depleted and without having had a clear view of Corral Bay. Expeditions to the Pacific in the late 1620s were either postponed or cancelled, and the first (and only) expedition to Chile from Dutch Brazil did not take place until 1643.⁴⁴

The only way of obtaining a map of Valdivia for Ruiters to use or redraw would have been the acquisition of what would have been regarded as sensitive geographical information, either as first-hand oral or graphic sources, from the interception of a Spanish vessel in the Atlantic. Unsurprisingly, the resultant map lacked the strategic value of the other maps Ruiters had designed, despite its maker's labelling it a 'truthful image' (*ware afbeelding*). Moreover, the geography of Valdivia and its

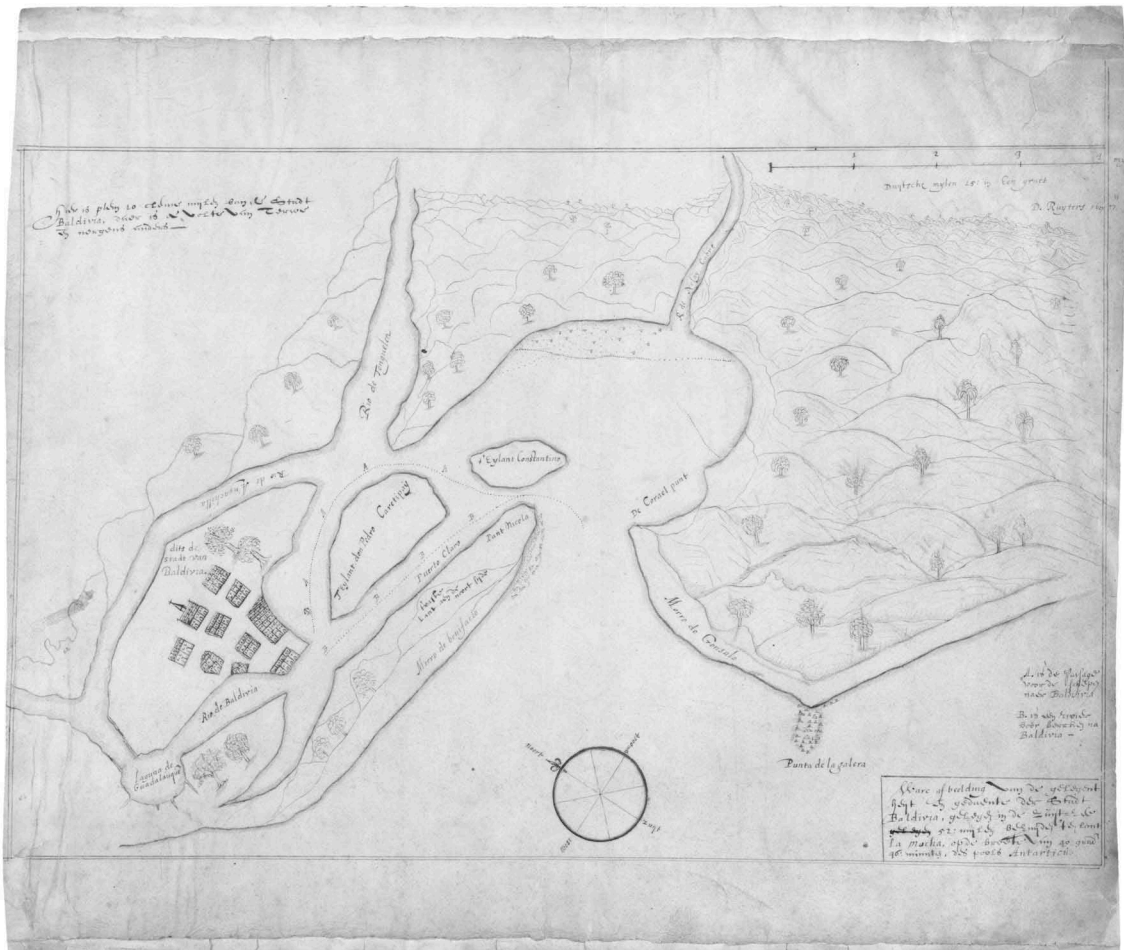


Fig. 7. Dierick Ruiters, Manuscript map of Valdivia and Corral Bay, Chile, 1627, 31 x 47 cm. North is to the top left. This is the only map of the five on which Ruiters emphasizes in the bottom right that it is a 'truthful depiction' (*Ware afbeelding van de gelegentheijt en gedaente der Stadt Baldivia*), the only one to include a scale-bar, at the top right, the only one to include a date, 1627, and the only one to include coordinates, in the top left corner, 'at a latitude of 40 degrees 46 minutes from the Antarctic Pole' (*op de breete van 40 graden 46 minuten des pools Antarcticus*). Nationaal Archief, 4 VEL 736. (Reproduced with permission from Nationaal Archief, The Hague.)

immediate surroundings that it portrayed deviated significantly from that shown on a map made by a Dutch eyewitness sixteen years later.⁴⁵

Map of Pernambuco

In the late 1620s the West India Company decided to make a more systematic effort to map the Atlantic world. The Amsterdam cartographer Hessel Gerritsz compiled all available information and spoke to dozens of sailors and merchants experienced in mapping ports and coastlines.⁴⁶ Two pages of his first, and most extensive, Atlantic rutter or *roteiro* were fully devoted to reporting oral information obtained from Ruiters.⁴⁷ Gerritsz's *roteiro* must have served as a guideline for the second major Dutch attack on Brazil in February 1630. In the aftermath of the invasion, in which Ruiters once again participated, one West India Company official estimated that cartographical knowledge of the Atlantic world in the United Provinces was now superior to that in Spain and Portugal.⁴⁸ When, later on, the Company embraced

a more open policy, Visscher was able to publicize in one of his news maps the progress that had been made in mapping places in Brazil on the basis of cartographical information supplied by Gerritsz.⁴⁹

The news map genre proved popular, and other publishers attempted to benefit from the interest shown in it. In this way, Ruiters's manuscript map of Pernambuco, which the Company directors had succeeded in keeping secret throughout the 1620s, reached a wider audience in 1630. His sketch was by no means as accurate as his drawings of Rio and Salvador, and lacked the precision Gerritsz gave in his version of the attack on Pernambuco in February 1630 (Fig. 8). It is not inconceivable that Ruiters took it from a Portuguese map, and that he had never actually set eyes on the place, to judge also from the way the toponyms of Olinda, Recife and Pernambuco are confused in the legend.

What stands out, though—apart from the elevated site of the town of Olinda and the ideal, from a Dutch perspective, maritime location of Recife (an island accessible by water on all sides)—are

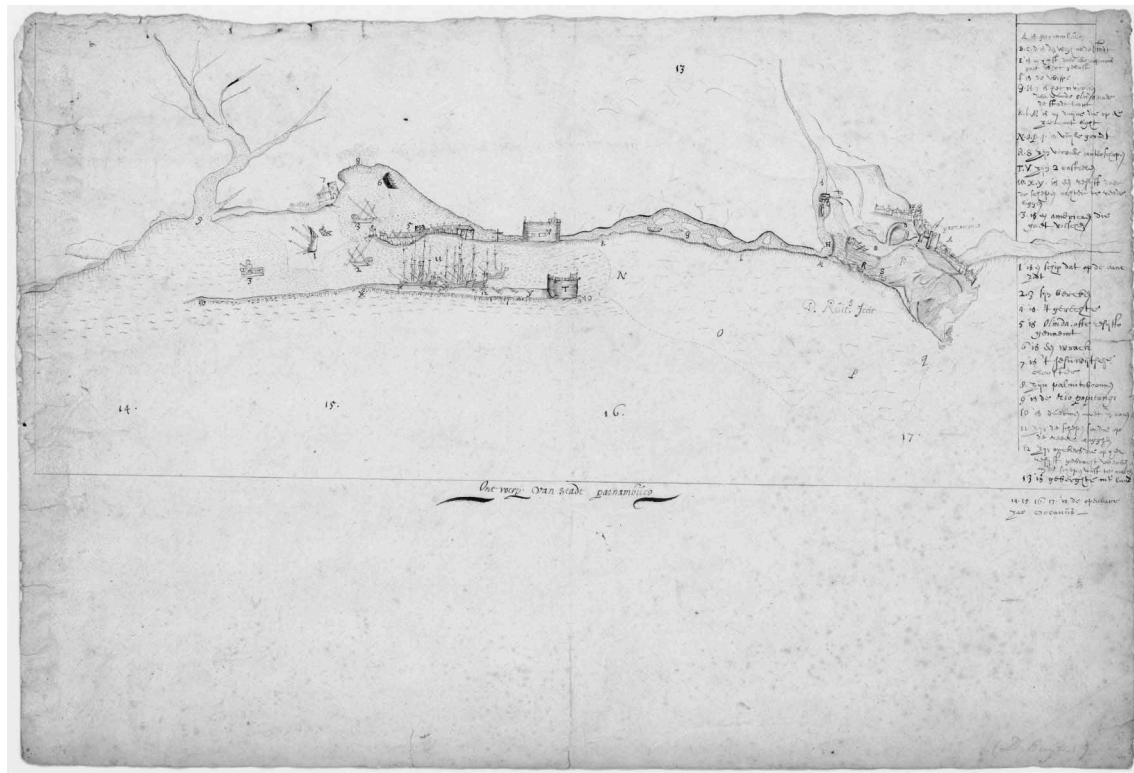


Fig. 8. Dierick Ruiters, Manuscript map of Pernambuco, with Olinda and Recife, c.1620? 30 × 43.5 cm. North is to the right. Ruiters entitles this map 'Design of the town Pernambuco' (Ontwerp van stadt Parnambuco), perhaps suggesting that he did not visit the place himself. Selected places on the map, mainly fortifications and other strategic locations, are explained in the legend on the right. Z. indicates 'an American going fishing' (een americaen die gaet visschen). Nationaal Archief, 4 VEL 710. (Reproduced with permission from Nationaal Archief, The Hague.)

the two fortresses. Labeled by Ruiters T and V respectively, the fortresses are at the heart of the composition. The prominence of these two strongholds, together with the straightness of the reef on which fortress T is sited, are particular details that Ruiters could have seen as he passed by on his way along the coast to or from Bahia or Rio. They are unique in seventeenth-century Dutch cartographical representations of Pernambuco.

As the news broke in Holland of the Dutch victory at Pernambuco, an anonymous publisher issued a news map celebrating the conquest of Olinda and Recife intended to rival the one Visscher produced in Amsterdam (Fig. 9).⁵⁰ Although the overall design differed greatly from Ruiters's sketch, the prominence and positioning of the two strongholds, the idiosyncratic lay out of the reef across the entrance to the port of Recife, and the scatter of half-submerged wrecks in the bay in front of the town are strongly reminiscent of Ruiters's drawing made several years before,

which was still in the possession of the West India Company.

The same can be said about several topographical errors found on both Ruiters's manuscript map and the anonymously printed news map. The curve of the coastline between Recife and Olinda, the slight widening of the reef on which the town of Recife is sited according to the legend, the abruptly rising hilltop on which Olinda stands, and the distant landmass behind Olinda that suggests, incorrectly, that the town is located on a peninsula, can all be found in both Ruiters's sketch and on the news map, implying that the publisher of the print had seen the Zeeland skipper's drawing, or at least something derived from it.

The title on the printed news map strongly suggests that the account of the invasion had come from someone aboard the vessel *De Braeck*. However, we can be reasonably certain that it did not stem from an eyewitness account from the fact that it is a mirror image with Olinda shown as if south of Recife

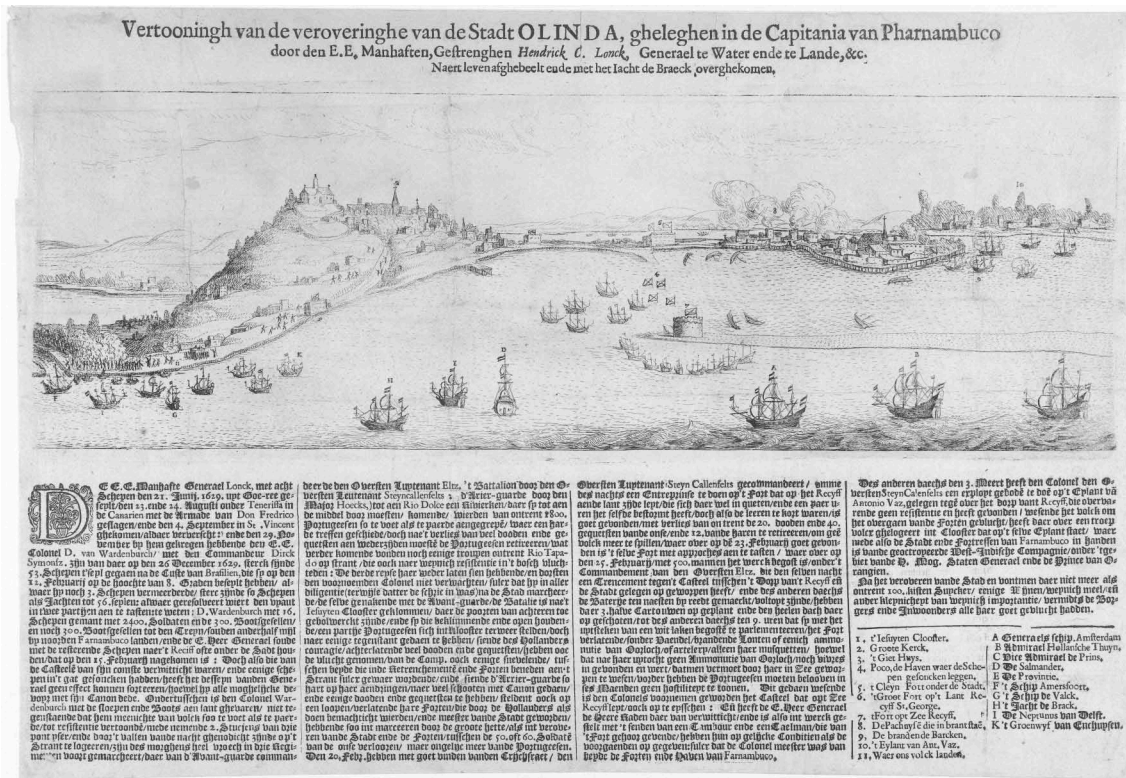


Fig. 9. Anonymous, *Vertooningh van de veroveringhe van de Stadt Olinda, ghelegghen in de Capitania van Pharnambuco* ([1630]). 26.9 × 39.2 cm. The composition is mirrored, thus completely distorting the geographical setting of Pernambuco, even though the title claims the image is displayed 'after life' (*naert leven*). The legend in the bottom right corner describes the key stages of the invasion of the Dutch fleet. The situation of the two castles and the depiction of Olinda on a peninsula suggests the design was possibly inspired by Ruiters's sketch. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1910-2190. (Reproduced with permission from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.)



Fig. 10. Anonymous, *Entwerffung Von Eroberung der Stadt Olinda so in der Hauptmanschaft Pharnambuco gelegen* ([1630]). 32 × 42 cm. Copper engraving, copied after the previous figure, but now with the right geographical setting, with north to the right. The German text and legend, in the bottom right corner, are practically identical to the Dutch text in Fig. 9. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, LOT 14117, no. 27. (Reproduced with permission from the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.)

instead of north. This kind of error was common among printers and publishers working in a hurry. Although a mistake like this could have damaged the anonymous printer's reputation in the eyes of his better-informed readers, the news map's appeal was sustained. It was later that year copied for a rather crudely drawn German news map of the same campaign, indirectly extending the influence of Ruiters's design beyond the United Provinces (Fig. 10). Once again, in neither publication, was Ruiters credited as the source.

Dierick Ruiters, a Re-evaluation

The conclusion to the story of Ruiters's maps brings us to the broader question that faced the Dutch West India Company in its early years: what to make public and what to keep secret? In his canonical essay 'Silences and secrecy', Brian Harley in

1988 emphasized the special position of the Dutch Republic in early modern Europe as regards cartographical secrecy by connecting an effervescent approach to publishing maps with the federation's nascent bourgeois republicanism.⁵¹ But almost in the same breath, Harley then highlighted the restrictive cartographical practices of the joint-stock companies in the United Provinces, emphasizing the prudent policy of the Dutch East India Company (VOC).

The West India Company in the 1620s and 1630s, however, was a different proposition, one that was more politically motivated than its successful counterpart in Asia. Both the example of corporate secrecy set by the VOC and the encounter with the Iberian enemy in the Atlantic world that routinely limited all access to its cartographical material clashed with the West India Company's eagerness to publicize its maps and

hence appropriate for the public domain the provinces in the Americas it aspired to control. Once the Company had established an initial territorial presence in Brazil, the directors could consider openness more rewarding than secrecy.

The production, dissemination (or lack thereof) and reception of Ruiters's hand-drawn maps indicates just how complicated was the issue of secrecy or openness for the West India Company as its Dutch Atlantic empire was emerging. It also shows how reputations in cartography and colonial history alike in later centuries depended on the availability of maps addressing a wider audience, as in the culture of openness that characterized the Dutch Golden Age. The names of Claes Jansz Visscher, Hessel Gerritsz and Joan Blaeu—key players in the cartographical representation of the incipient Dutch Atlantic world—are well known. Still, it was not until 1675 that Arend Roggeveen finally provided the cartographical overview of the Atlantic world that Ruiters may have already had in mind.

It is only because of the refusal of the West India Company to publish, or allow him to publish, his manuscript maps that Dierick Ruiters has not acquired canonical status as one of the cartographical founders of the Dutch Atlantic world. By the time two of his manuscript maps inspired publishers to produce printed copies, their urgency as sources of cartographical intelligence had already diminished. Perhaps the most significant factor in this imposed silence was that Ruiters's name as draftsman of the original manuscript maps was never mentioned in connection with the derivatives. Finally, the nineteenth-century division of the archival remnants of Dutch Brazil, in which maps were separated from the written documents to which they belonged, further added to the arbitrary amnesia that diminished Ruiters's reputation as one of the true pathfinders of the Dutch Atlantic world.

Within the world of print, intriguingly, Ruiters's reputation suffered the same fate. Sections of his *Toortse der Zee-vaert* had already been surpassed in 1625 when the first of several authoritative publications by the West India Company director (and chronicler) Johannes de Laet, the *Nieuwe Wereldt ofte beschrijvinghe van West-Indien* [New World or Description of the West Indies], appeared. Unlike Visscher in the case of Ruiters's news map, De Laet did cite Ruiters as one of his prime sources.⁵² But since De Laet's book immediately attained the kind of prestige in the Dutch book market that *Toortse der Zee-vaert* never did, it stole Ruiters's thunder more than anything else.

The open culture of the Dutch Golden Age and, more specifically, of the Dutch Atlantic enterprise with its very public dimension, cultivated the idea that what really mattered about the West India Company's geographical knowledge was invariably made available in print. Dierick Ruiters's manuscript maps provide a crucial correction to that picture and may ultimately help to put a key figure in the story of Dutch Atlantic expansion back into the historiographies of the West India Company and early Dutch cartography.

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2. The exception is Kees Zandvliet, *Mapping for Money: Maps, Plans, and Topographic Paintings and Their Role in Dutch Overseas Expansion in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Amsterdam, Batavian Lion, 1998). Zandvliet discusses only one of Ruiters's five maps that are the subject of this article (173).
3. On the Dutch Atlantic 'moment', roughly between 1620 and 1670, see Wim Klooster, *The Dutch Moment: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2016). The term 'empire' is traditionally applied loosely to the early modern United Provinces.
4. María M. Portuondo, *Secret Science: Spanish Cosmography and the New World* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009), 264. Both Spain and Portugal employed maps in their attempts to claim overseas territories, most notably the Philippines (ibid., 81).
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7. Günter Schilder, *Early Dutch Maritime Cartography* (Leiden, Brill, 2017), 255–487.
8. *Oost- ende West-Indische spiegel der 2 leste navigatiën, ghedaen inden jaeren 1614, 15, 16, 17 ende 18. daer in veroot woort, in wat gestalt Ioris van Speilbergen door de Magellanes de werelt rontom geseylt heeft*, ed. R. Posthumus Meyjes (Amsterdam, De Bussy, 1952), 29.
9. Brommer and Den Heijer, *Comprehensive Atlas* (see note 1), 1: 174–75.

Die Manuskriptkarten von Dierick Ruiters und die Geburt des 'niederländischen Atlantiks'

1621, als sich der 1609 vereinbarte zwölfjährige Waffenstillstand dem Ende zuneigte, wurde die Niederländische Westindische Compagnie (WIC)—mit dem ausdrücklichen Ziel, eine zweite Front in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Habsburger Monarchie zu eröffnen und spanische Besitzungen in Nord- und Südamerika zu bekriegen—gegründet. Eine der Schlüsselfiguren in dieser sehr frühen Phase des 'atlantischen Reichs der WIC' war der aus der Provinz Zeeland stammende Schiffskapitän Dierick Ruiters. Dieser übermittelte den Direktoren der Westindischen Kompanie in den 1620er-Jahren fünf Manuskriptkarten relevanter strategischer Positionen der Habsburger, welche wichtige geographische und militärische Informationen enthielten. Der Artikel analysiert den militärischen Gehalt dieser fünf wenig bekannten Karten, mittels derer niederländische Angriffe auf spanische Bollwerke an der südamerikanischen Küste befördert wurden. Die Karten unterlagen der Geheimhaltung, ihr Inhalt erlangte in Form später veröffentlichter Karten dennoch eine gewisse Öffentlichkeit. Da jedoch Ruiters nicht als Zeichner dieser Karten bekannt wurde und weil sich die Bewertung der Kolonialgeschichte und -kartographie in späteren Jahrhunderten an einer breiteren Öffentlichkeit zugänglichen Karten orientierte, geriet sein Name in Vergessenheit—auch bei Spezialisten der 'atlantischen Welt'.

Los mapas manuscritos de Dierick Ruiters y el nacimiento del Atlántico Holandés

En 1621, como la Tregua de los Doce Años estaba llegando a su fin, se fundó la Compañía Holandesa de las Indias Occidentales con la explícita instrucción de abrir un segundo frente en la guerra contra la Monarquía Habsburgo y atacar los establecimientos españoles en América. El capitán holandés Dierick Ruiters fue una de las figuras clave en esta fase embrionaria del imperio atlántico holandés. Desde 1620 presentó a los directores de la West India Company con una crucial inteligencia geográfica y militar, cinco mapas manuscritos de las posiciones estratégicas del imperio Habsburgo. En este artículo se analiza el valor militar de estos cinco mapas poco conocidos, que facilitaron los ataques holandeses a las fortalezas españolas a lo largo de la costa de Sudamérica. Los mapas de Ruiters fueron inicialmente secretos, pero eventualmente alcanzaron amplia audiencia en forma de nuevos mapas impresos. Porque, aunque Ruiters no fue nunca mencionado como dibujante y porque en las últimas centurias la reputación en cartografía e historia colonial, igualmente tendía a depender de la disponibilidad de los mapas para una amplia audiencia, su nombre ha sido todo menos olvidado para los estudiosos del mundo atlántico.