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## Dead on arrival: the unused cartographic legacy of Carl Friedrich Reimer

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### Citation

Bos, J. (2019). Dead on arrival: the unused cartographic legacy of Carl Friedrich Reimer. In A. J. Kent, S. Vervust, I. F. Demhart, & N. Milea (Eds.), *Lecture Notes in Geoinformation and Cartography* (pp. 287-307). Springer Nature. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-23447-8

Version: Publisher's Version

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3422479>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Lecture Notes

in Geoinformation and Cartography

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International Cartographic Association (ICA)

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Alexander James Kent

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Imre Josef Demhardt

Nick Millea *Editors*

# Mapping Empires: Colonial Cartographies of Land and Sea

7th International Symposium of the  
ICA Commission on the History of  
Cartography, 2018



 Springer

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Editors

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ISSN 1863-2246                      ISSN 1863-2351 (electronic)  
Lecture Notes in Geoinformation and Cartography  
ISSN 2195-1705                      ISSN 2195-1713 (electronic)  
Publications of the International Cartographic Association (ICA)  
ISBN 978-3-030-23446-1              ISBN 978-3-030-23447-8 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23447-8>

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# ‘Dead on Arrival’: The Unused Cartographic Legacy of Carl Friedrich Reimer



Jeroen Bos

**Abstract** After the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784), which ended disastrously for the Dutch East India Company (VOC), the need to reform was strongly felt. The Board of Directors (*Heren XVII*) asked for state support. This resulted in the formation of an independent Military Commission, with the mandate of reporting on the (military) state of affairs in the East, surveying the settlements and making plans for their improvement. The Prussian-born Carl Friedrich Reimer was employed as the main surveyor and military engineer. He had already been in the VOC’s service for two decades before he was given this important task and became a confidant of Governor-General Arnold Willem Alting. The Governor-General was very skeptical towards the activities of the Military Commission, which operated fully outside the Company’s established chain of command. By maneuvering Reimer into the Commission, Alting had eyes and ears in its affairs. Next to observing, surveying, drawing plans and writing recommendations, Reimer would also inform Alting about the journeys. Every major Dutch settlement from South Africa to the Moluccas was visited by the Military Commission, forming a unique view on the (military) state of affairs of the Dutch presence in Asia in around 1790. Together with the various recommendations that were accompanied by the excellent military maps by Reimer, the Dutch could make a fresh start in their imperial ambitions. However, when the Commission Fleet returned to the Republic in 1793 and all the reports and maps were transferred, the political constellation no longer had an eye for the overseas troubles of the VOC. The young and revolutionary French Republic just declared war. As such, the cartographic legacy of CF Reimer was ‘dead on arrival’.

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© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2020  
A. J. Kent et al. (eds.), *Mapping Empires: Colonial Cartographies of Land and Sea*,  
Lecture Notes in Geoinformation and Cartography,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23447-8\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23447-8_16)

# 1 Introduction

*‘The Stadtholder, whose marriage was solemnized on 4 October in Berlin, was ceremoniously welcomed in the city of The Hague. In Amsterdam there were festivities as well. Some cannons were fired and bells were ringing. There was joyous music and plays’.*<sup>1</sup>

The fourth of October 1767 was a special day in the history of the Dutch Republic. In Berlin the young Stadtholder Willem V (1748–1806) married the Prussian princess Frederica Sophia Wilhemina (1751–1820). As was common, this was an arranged marriage, tying bonds between the House of Orange and the House of Hohenzollern. Throughout the country festivities were organized to celebrate this moment. The city of Amsterdam was no exception with illuminated buildings, fireworks, music and plays.

Amsterdam, though no longer the bustling metropole of the seventeenth century, still attracted many fortune seekers from Scandinavia and the German lands. It is very well conceivable that the protagonist of this contribution, a Prussian man named Carl Friedrich Reimer, was wandering the streets of Amsterdam while the festivities to celebrate the royal marriage took place. In contrast to his more fortunate compatriot, Carl Friedrich belonged to the anonymous German crowd, looking for job opportunities in Holland. When all other options failed there was always employment to be found at the long-distance trading companies: the Dutch West Indian Company or the Dutch East India Company (abbreviated VOC, after *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*). At the main office, the austere *Oostindisch Huis* in the Oude Hoogstraat (Fig. 1), he either enlisted himself, or was collectively enlisted by a broker, in the rank of common soldier for a wage of nine guilders per month. His ship, *Vlietlust*, sailed from the island of Texel on 20 December 1767 bound for Ceylon.

Coming from the town of Königsberg (present-day Kaliningrad), Reimer followed in the footsteps of many anonymous Germans before him, seeking a better life and maybe a little adventure in the East.<sup>2</sup> Unlike so many of them though, Reimer would not go unnoticed in history. Amsterdam was the last grand European city he saw in his life. He fully embraced his career, spanning almost thirty years, within the VOC. From ‘mere’ soldier he climbed the hierarchical ladder and eventually distinguished himself as a military engineer, enjoying the necessary patronage from superiors along the line. He eventually died in Batavia (present-day Jakarta) in 1796 as Director of Fortifications and Inspector of Waterworks in the Dutch East Indies.

This chapter follows CF Reimer in the service of the VOC, especially during three decisive years in his career. As attaché to the Military Commission to the East (1789–1793), Reimer surveyed many of the fortifications of the VOC and drew plans and maps accordingly. He is by far the most productive in situ military

<sup>1</sup>Jacob Bicker-Ray in his manuscript chronology of Amsterdam, 9 November 1767.

<sup>2</sup>For the life and work of CF Reimer, see van Gerven (2002).



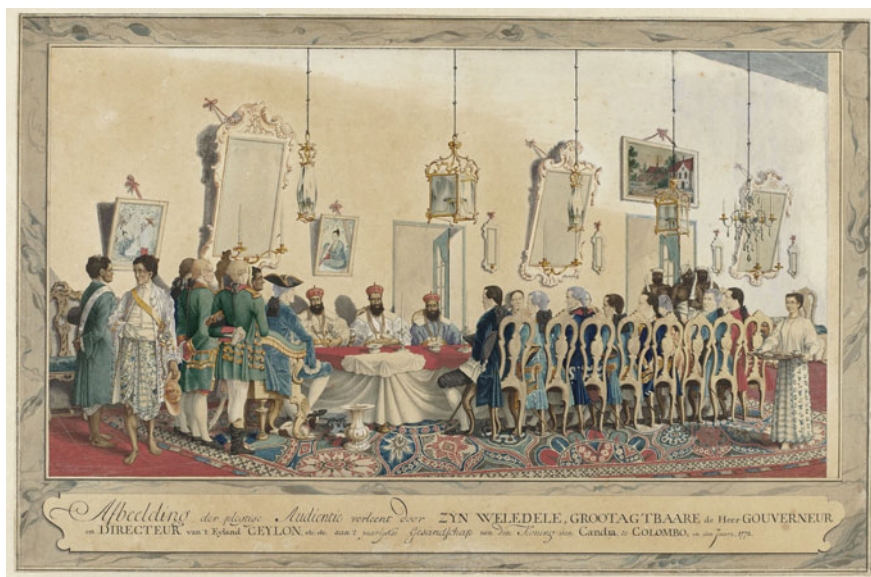


**Fig. 1** Main office of the VOC's Amsterdam branch at the Oude Hoogstraat by R Vinkeles, 1768 (Courtesy Stadsarchief Amsterdam)

mapmaker the VOC ever employed. Still, his cartographic legacy is largely unknown. The reasons why his production was never fully exploited, and as such 'dead on arrival', will be revealed.

## 2 Formative Years

As soon as the Dutch East India ship *Vlietlust* arrived at Ceylon in July 1768, Reimer was part of the island's military. Within a year he was employed as *derde chirurgijn* (third surgeon) and his wages were raised to sixteen guilders. We know virtually nothing of the life and education of the young Prussian prior to his enlistment with the Company, but this seems to suggest that he had at least a rudimentary knowledge of *materia medica*, maybe even having followed classes in medicine or botany. Five years later, in 1774, he was promoted once more and now held the rank of *onderchirurgijn*, or junior surgeon, earning twenty four guilders per month (De Silva and Beumer 1988: 460–461).



**Fig. 2** Formal visit by the envoys of the King of Candy to the Ceylon Governor in Colombo by CF Reimer, 1772 (Courtesy Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. nr RP-T-1904-18)

In this early period of his career in Dutch colonial service, Reimer also found pleasure in drawing. A very famous watercolour by his hand is now in the possession of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, called *de Afbeelding der plechtige audientie verleent door Zijne Weledele Grootachtbare de Heer Gouverneur en Directeur van 't Eyland Ceylon, aan 't jaarlijkse Gesandschap van den Koning van Candia, in den jaare 1772*. It translates as ‘Depiction of the formal visit, granted by the Honorable Governor and Director of the Island of Ceylon, granted to the Envoy of the King of Candy, in the year 1772’ (Fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> Research has confirmed the lifelike portrayal of the people in this watercolour. Although sometimes VOC staff developed drawing skills in the East, the overall quality suggests education in Europe (Zandvliet 2002a: 129–131).

A set of two watercolours are attributed to Reimer that depicts the South Indian town of Chidambaram from roughly the same period.<sup>4</sup> The town is known for the enormous Hindu temple complex. From his later life it is known that Reimer had a personal interest in ancient Hindu architecture, so we can with near-certainty attribute this set—also in the Rijksmuseum—to Reimer. Whether the Prussian painted them in situ or copied an unknown original is still subject of investigation (Zandvliet 2002a: 239–241). In the years 1773–1774, a detachment of the Ceylon army was sent to the Indian mainland to support the Dutch settlement of

<sup>3</sup>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. nr RP-T-1904-18.

<sup>4</sup>Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. nr RP-T-1904-19 and RP-T-1904-20.

Negapatnam at the Coromandel Coast. In the 1770s and 1780s, the Mysore Kingdom under Hyder Ali and, later, Tipu Sultan, was a constant threat for the European presence in this part of India. It is known that Reimer stayed at the Coast somewhere in the 1770s, probably as surgeon to the Ceylon military detachment at Negapatnam.

An anonymous map of the city and direct hinterland of Negapatnam lies in the collection of the Scheepvaartmuseum in Amsterdam (Fig. 3) (Gommans et al. 2010: 344–345).<sup>5</sup> This needs further investigation, but Reimer was possibly involved in making this map. However, the cartographic style, lettering, and also the scale bar—in *Schreeden* rather than the more commonly used *Rijnlandse Roeden*—differ from the later known maps by Reimer. Yet, it could be a collective work for which Reimer did the surveying and perhaps he even drew the sketches. It would explain his promotion in November 1777 to *eerste landmeter* or head surveyor in the rank of *vaandrig ingenieur*. The Ceylon government was always on the lookout for skilled surveyors since the Dutch East India Company was not only a merchant, but also a ruler on the island. The Dutch occupied large parts of the coastline and some inland regions and accurate maps of the regions were required for tax purposes. It seems that Reimer was employed to help survey the lands, although no maps by his hand are known from this period.

### 3 Promotion in Wartime

In 1782, Reimer was promoted as *fabriek* at the city of Colombo. A *fabriek* was an architect and main supervisor over the artisans working at the Company buildings, such as the warehouses, offices, ship wharves, hospitals, fortifications as well as public and religious housing. This marks the middle stage of Reimer's career and it is necessary to consider the bigger picture and discuss some geo-political matters in order to understand his further career more meaningfully.

In the year Reimer was promoted to *fabriek*, the Dutch fought a war, namely the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784). It painfully reaffirmed the weak position of the Dutch Republic and overseas the Dutch were humiliated. Several settlements in India were taken without a blow. Only the support of well-paid French allies prevented the takeover of Ceylon and of the Cape Colony. It was clear to friend and foe: the Dutch position in the East was frail. The Company Board of Directors, called the *Heeren XVII*, or Gentlemen Seventeen, had to swallow their pride and ask the state for financial and military support. The *Staten-Generaal* and Stadtholder decided to send a naval fleet to Asia. Commodore Jacob Pieter van Braam (1737–1803) came to the aide of the VOC and restored its prestige, especially among Asian opponents (Enthoven 2002; Bruijn 2003; Knaap et al. 2015: 156–159). When the commodore returned to the Republic, he sounded the alarm regarding the

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<sup>5</sup>Scheepvaartmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. nr. SNSM a0145 (211) [0005].



**Fig. 3** City and hinterland of Negapatnam, artist(s) yet unknown, ca. 1773–1774 (Scheepvaartmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. nr. SNSM a0145 (211)-0005)



deplorable state of defence in Asia. Van Braam found a willing ear in Joan Cornelis van der Hoop (1742–1825), secretary of the Amsterdam branch of the Dutch Navy (*Admiraliteit*). Slowly, but surely, a plan was devised to inspect the Dutch overseas settlements by an independent Military Commission. This Commission would be installed by the Stadtholder, who was believed to be the only person who could break the deadlock and forcefully introduce the much-needed (military) reforms.

## 4 (Vain) Attempts to Reform

The Board of Directors was not entirely oblivious to the deplorable state of the military defence. After the war, in 1785, the brothers Van de Graaff were appointed as VOC governors. Cornelis Jacob van de Graaff (1734–1812) would head the Cape Colony. His younger sibling Willem Jacob van de Graaff (1736–1804) would rule the Ceylon government (Tates 2018). Both brothers enjoyed a military education in the Republic. Cornelis would begin as engineer in the Dutch Army to eventually become General Inspector of Fortifications in Holland, before his appointment as governor. Willem followed a less military path. As early as 1755 he was sent to Ceylon as merchant for the VOC. Jacob Cornelis was explicitly instructed to modernize the fortifications at the Cape. Also, a military school would be established where the technical military staff would be trained. After graduation, the new recruits were deployed all over Asia. Willem had comparable ambitions. As soon as he was installed in post he worked on projects to improve the main settlements in Ceylon.

These ambitious brothers would find a powerful opponent in Governor-General Willem Arnold Alting (1724–1800), presiding in Batavia with his Council of the Dutch East Indies, collectively known as the *Hoge Regering* or High Government (Fig. 4). Alting took control in 1780, right at the start of the Fourth Dutch-Anglo War. He would stay Governor-General until the demise of the Dutch East India Company in 1795. Historiography has judged harshly on the role of Alting in the unstoppable decline of the VOC. He is called a conservative manager, a model of the *Ancien Régime* ruler who would or could not yield to calls for reform (van Putten 2002: 189).

These factors may indeed have played a role in the passive stance of Batavia against proposed (military) reforms. However, a more selfish motive was fear. Alting, and his closest allies in the Council, probably feared that the ambitious Van de Graaff brothers might succeed and gain support in the Dutch Republic. It would be a matter of time before they pursued the highest post in VOC hierarchy: that of Alting himself. To counter this imaginary attack, Alting and his Council predictably blocked and discredited the projects coming from the Cape Colony and Ceylon. The resulting stalemate could only be broken by an external force.

The need for a Military Commission was high, but its creation faced many difficulties. To start with, the political system in the Dutch Republic was in chaos. A near civil war broke out between the so-called *patriotten* and *orangisten* (van Nimwegen 2017). In short, the *patriotten* opposed the influence of the Stadtholder

**Fig. 4** Portrait of Governor-General Willem Arnold Alting by JFA Tischbein (Courtesy Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. nr. SK-A-3785)



and wanted a regime change or, at the very least, major reforms in government. The *orangisten* were loyal to the House of Orange and required no change at all, pushing instead for a more powerful Stadtholder. The discussion was mainly fought over anonymous pamphlets, but in 1787, tensions reached a violent climax. Order was restored only after intervention from Prussia. Secondly, the necessity of a Military Commission was questioned by many. Joan Cornelis van der Hoop had to convince several persons, not in the least the Stadtholder. Van der Hoop tried to sweeten the message stating that a successful inspection tour by this Commission ‘would bring Glory to the Office of the Stadtholder’, stealing the thunder from the *patriotten*. Thirdly, it would prove quite an ordeal to find able men willing to tour through Asia for several years. Among his own circles Van der Hoop recruited the naval officers Jan Olpher Vaillant (1751–1800) and Christiaan Anthony VerHuell (1760–1832) to head the Commission (Dörr 1988; Landheer 2006). But no artillery and infantry officers could be confirmed. Eventually, Johan Frederik Levinus Graevestein was persuaded to become an infantry officer to supervise the subordinate army officers, all of whom were Prussians.

## 5 The Military Commission to the East (1789–1793)

After a long delay, the Commission’s fleet of two ships, the *Zephir* and the *Havick*, finally set sail for Asia in February 1789. Vaillant, VerHuell and Graevestein would only return to Holland in June 1793 (Appendix). Reimer’s name circulated in the Board Room of the Amsterdam branch of the Dutch East India Company and it was

thanks to commodore Van Braam that he was considered for a position as main surveyor and mapmaker of the Military Commission.

How did this come to be? Van Braam and Reimer had met each other in Ceylon in August 1785 (Odegard 2017). The commodore was ending his Asian tour of duty and was on his way back to the Dutch Republic. Reimer had just transferred to Batavia, where he was soon incorporated in the circles of Willem Arnold Alting. At Ceylon, Reimer made plans for the construction of modified fortifications on the island of Ceylon. Reimer showed these plans to Van Braam, who was deeply impressed by the quality of his mapmaking. When the projects made by Reimer were presented to Willem van de Graaff, however, they were rejected. Reimer was a victim of the power struggle between the Van de Graaff brothers and Alting. Moreover, Reimer was a *fabriek*, an artisan. The Van de Graaff brothers represented the new class: educated military engineers and Reimer lacked formal training. Besides, his plans were based on Prussian principles of fortification. All were insuperable reasons to be rejected, according to Van de Graaff.

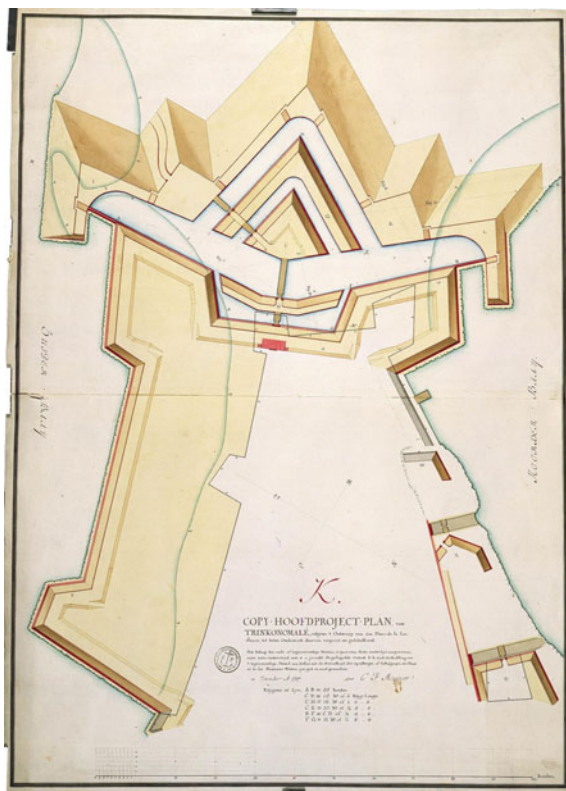
The Ceylon governor sought expertise from the French engineers at Pondicherry. He invited Chevalier De la Lustrière and his assistant De la Goupillière to inspect the Dutch settlement on Ceylon during the years 1786–1787 (Fig. 5). Reimer criticized the French plans for being too costly and too rigid. The French system required the complete reconstruction of new fortifications without considering the existing infrastructure or the local terrain. This meant that the Dutch settlements were defenseless during the years of their demolition and reconstruction. As such, according to Reimer, the French plans were impracticable fantasies. Furthermore, Reimer thought it was unwise that foreign engineers, working for a competing Company, were given full access. In the eyes of Reimer, it was thanks to Van de Graaff that the French were now completely aware of the Dutch defenses and the weaknesses at Ceylon. Alting was glad of this sharp critique by Reimer, which meant that progress of Van de Graaff's projects could be blocked. *Heeren XVII* agreed and a stalemate was the result. Reimer could get his revenge thanks to the mediation of Van Braam; because the commodore advocated that Reimer would assist the Military Commission, he could now present his projects directly to Vaillant, VerHuell and Graevestein.

For Alting, who was very skeptical towards the Military Commission, it was very convenient that Reimer would be attached to it. Alting ordered Reimer to cooperate with the commissioners, but at the same time to report to the High Government. Reimer decided to keep a journal in which he wrote the most memorable events that took place during the inspection tour. An extract was given to Alting to inform the Governor-General about the tour. This unique manuscript is now kept at the National Archives of The Netherlands (Fig. 6).<sup>6</sup> Reimer travelled to Ceylon where he was to await the ships which came from the Cape Colony. Here he faced Willem van de Graaff and his team of engineers, which Reimer criticized so

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<sup>6</sup>NL-HaNa, 1.10.03, inv. nr. 87.

**Fig. 5** Copy of the project plan for the defenses of Trincomale; original by De La Lustière, copy made for analysis and criticism by CF Reimer (Courtesy Nationaal Archief, inv. nr. VEL1016A)



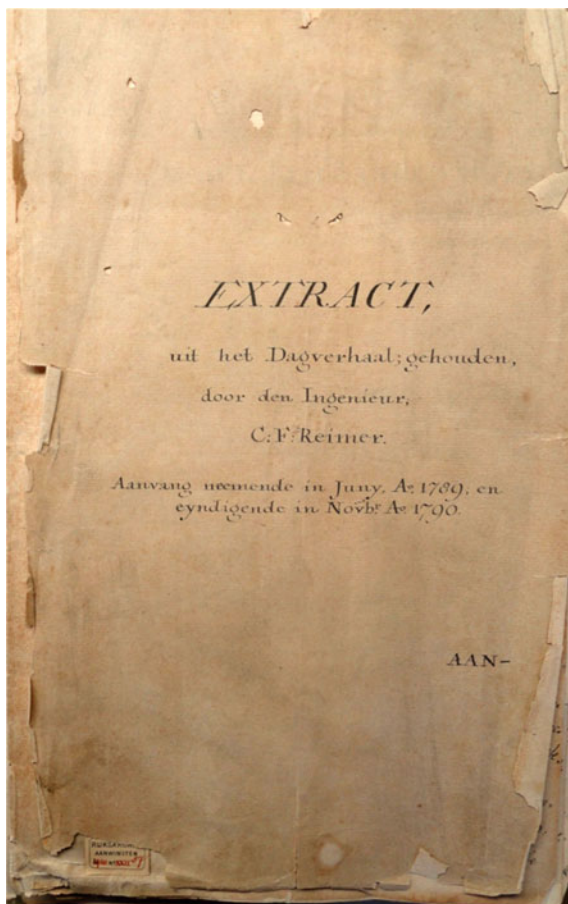
harshly. In his journal he wrote that it took a while before the awkward situation subsided and normal relations between the two were established.

The inspection tour may be divided into three parts: the first being the inspection of the Cape Colony, the second the inspection of the so-called *Westerkwartieren* or all provinces west of Batavia, and the third the inspection of the possessions in what contemporaries called the *Grote Oost*, or Great East (the settlements in what can now be roughly called Indonesia and Malaysia).

Reimer fulfilled a dual role. For the Military Commission he measured, surveyed and made maps of the several settlements. At the same time, he kept the High Government informed of the main events during the tour. Reimer now had the ideal opportunity and was very aware that if his projects and plans were judged favourably by the naval and military command in the Dutch Republic, he could really leave his mark. With this in mind he set himself on a mission to produce as many maps as possible. His name is mentioned on several project plans, although it must be stated that Reimer had help from the Prussian engineers and other officers on board ship. In his journal, which Altling would read, Reimer never mentions their names.



**Fig. 6** Extract of the diary kept by CF Reimer; presented to WA Alting and the Council of the Dutch East Indies, 2 volumes, 1789–1792 (Courtesy Nationaal Archief, inv. nr. 1.10.03, inv. nr. 87)



## 6 A Closer Look: Madras and Riau

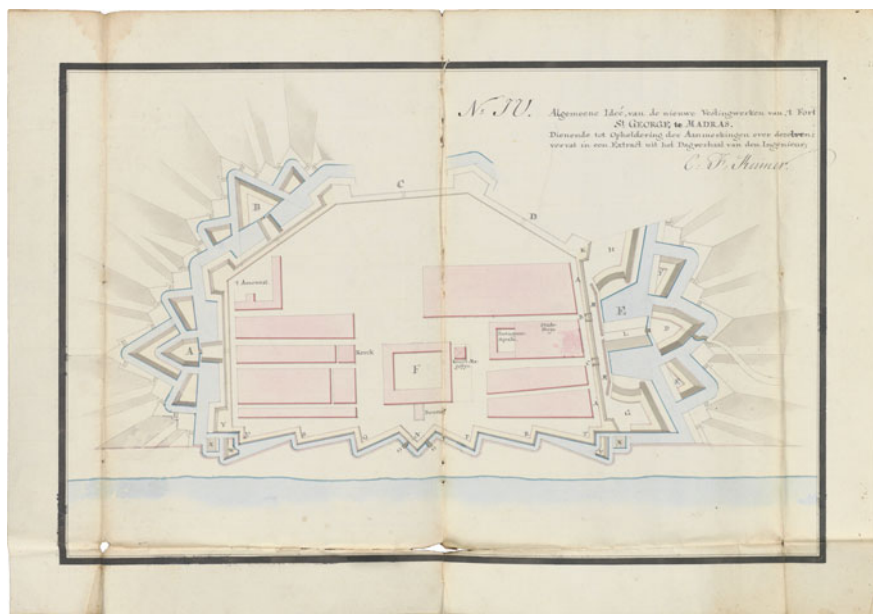
Reimer and his accomplices produced around fifty maps and plans of the Dutch settlements in Africa and Asia (see [Appendix](#)). Most of them were reproduced in the seven volumes comprising the series *Comprehensive Atlas of the Dutch United East India Company* (2006–2010). Although careful archival research was done for this enormous project, a military plan by Reimer of the English defense works at Madras (present-day Chennai) was missed.<sup>7</sup> This attempt at espionage by the Military Commission deserves proper attention. Secondly, some focus will be placed on the activities in the Riau archipelago. This region would come to have

<sup>7</sup>NL-HaNa, 1.10.03, inv. nr. 76.

much strategic importance in the early nineteenth century. The commissioners sensed this future interest and made considerable efforts to survey and report on it.

## 6.1 *Espionage at Madras*

Although the Commission worked to a very tight schedule, the commissioners also found time to plan stopovers with European competitors. When they inspected the Coromandel Coast, they visited the Danish at Tranquebar and the English at Madras in September 1790. It would prove to be a great opportunity to gather information on their strengths and weaknesses. Commissioners Vaillant, VerHuell and Graevestein tasked Reimer to discretely appraise the defences of Fort St George. Interestingly, Reimer initially objected because he was not sure that, as a VOC servant, he was allowed to set foot in the English port city. After the commissioners reassured him that he now felt under jurisdiction of the Military Commission, he was persuaded. A regular full survey with instruments was, of course, completely out of the question. The English hosts were fully aware of the hidden agenda of their Dutch guests and only allowed them guided walks through town and around the defences. It is for this reason that Reimer delivered a plan (and supplementary report) on which some blank areas can be seen (Fig. 7). He noted that the parts which he did not get to see



**Fig. 7** Plan of the defenses of Fort St George (Madras) by CF Reimer, 1790 (Nationaal Archief, inv. nr. 1.10.03, inv. nr. 76)

were intentionally left unfilled. Reimer considered himself a professional military engineer and he wrote that accuracy should be the leading principle in mapmaking and cartography. In the report he apologized more than once for the incompleteness of the plan he had produced. Incomplete as it may have been, the accuracy of the parts he did draw is admirable. Both his quality and pace of work were noted and appreciated. On various occasions the commissioners Vaillant, VerHuell and Graevestein wrote positively on his work to their superiors. They were not being merely polite, since the other engineers and officers tasked with drawing plans were scolded in the same letters for their lack of competence, effort or quality.

In the manuscript intended for the High Government, Reimer also wrote interesting facts about the botanical activities of Dr James Anderson, a Scottish physician in EIC service. In the Company garden at Madras he (unsuccessfully) tried to grow *opuntia*, a cactus which was the host plant for the highly sought cochineal insect. This little bug provided intense red dye, indigenous to Oaxaca in Mexico, and was exclusively imported to Europe by the Spanish, who firmly kept this profitable commodity to themselves. Under the Director of Kew, Joseph Banks (1743–1820), an imperial scheme was set up to break this Spanish monopoly (Butler Greenfield 2005). The English tried to get living cochineals and transplant the bugs to Madras, where it was thought that the climate was comparable to Oaxaca.

Anderson was ordered to grow *opuntia*, which the bugs liked, and to wait for the right shipment of the insect (which never arrived). Reimer was invited to the garden by Dr Anderson, who probably recognized that Reimer was a fellow medical practitioner, and perhaps also as another 'amateur'; a person in pursuit of knowledge for the sake of it, or its 'usefulness'. The Prussian was unimpressed by this experiment, stating that 'further investigative research needs to be done in order to conclude that transplanting the Spanish cochineal to another climate does not negatively affect its purity'. He was, however, shocked by the revelation that in another garden in Madras the English tried to cultivate cinnamon. According to Dr Anderson, the English managed to acquire a living tree via a certain Madame Leitts (possibly Lights), who received it from her Dutch acquaintances on Ceylon. If this were true, Reimer argued, and if the cinnamon proved to be of good quality, the Dutch had lost one of their most profitable commodities to their English competitors. A worrying observation indeed.

By drawing the plan of the military defenses of Fort St George, accompanied by a written report of 22 sheets, and the separate description of his visit and observations at the botanical garden, Reimer clearly committed espionage as he took on the role of information broker, passing classified information to his superiors.

## 6.2 Opportunities at Riau

In the Malay world, the Dutch contented themselves for over a century with Malacca, the port city they conquered from the Portuguese in 1641. The conquest turned out to be more important strategically than commercially. From Malacca,

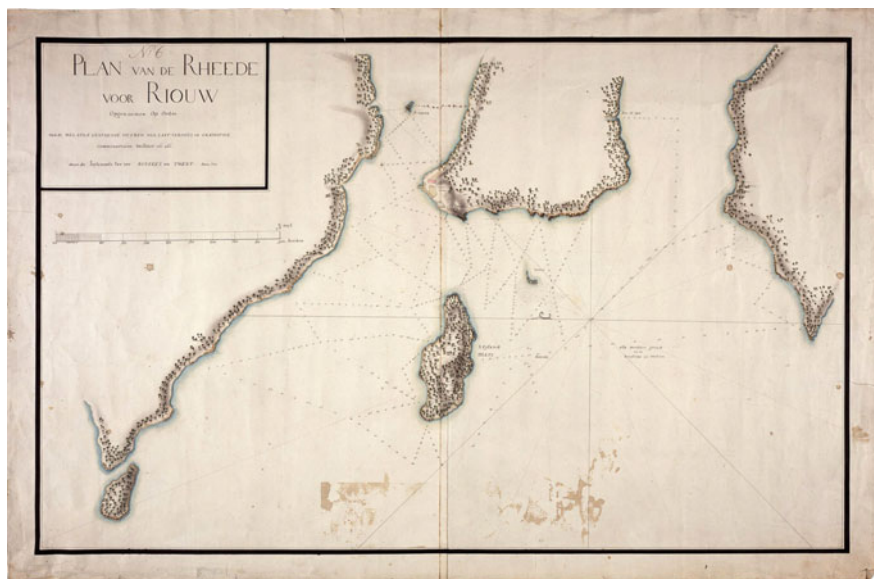
control could extend over the ruler of Johor and European settlements in the Straits of Malacca could be blocked. This situation changed after 1760 when Sultan Suleiman (1722–1760) died and the succession was fought out between pro- and anti-Bugis parties. Eventually, the Bugis of Riau and Selangor saw in Raja Haji a leader to start the rebellion against the Dutch hegemony. The whole event led to unintentional Dutch involvement in the region. Haji and his Bugis were defeated in 1784 by commodore Van Braam. The operation was not so much executed to punish the Bugis—although they were considered a great nuisance by the Dutch—as it was an attempt to repel growing English penetration into the Straits. The Dutch (justly) suspected them to open a post at Riau. Their suspicion was further raised when, in negotiations after the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, an English offer was made to transfer the captured port city of Negapatnam at the Coromandel Coast for the right to settle at Riau (Tarling 1962; Lewis 1995).

In response, the VOC immediately began to erect a provisional fortification at Riau in 1785. When the Military Commission inspected the place in December 1791 and January 1792, they took time to survey the harbour, the settlement and its vicinity. The commissioners wanted to assess the reasons for English interest and to understand why the Dutch should give more attention to establishing a more solid presence in the region. They felt future opportunities would be gained from this location, and sought several motives why a permanent and firm fortification was admissible. The commissioners tasked their naval officers to draw a map of the harbour and sailing routes to Riau (Fig. 8), while Reimer produced a topographical overview (Fig. 9) as well as a military plan with a projected extension of the defences (Fig. 10).

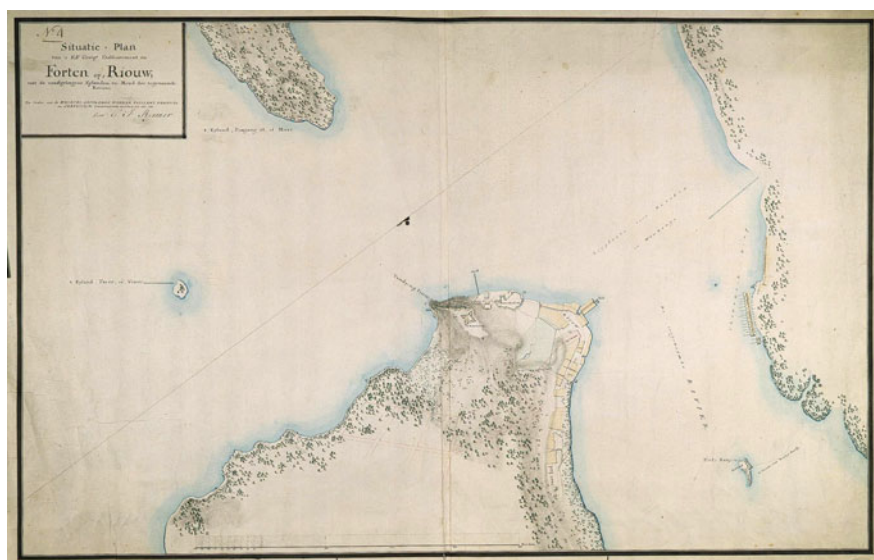
The fact that this hitherto insignificant location in the Dutch Empire attracted so much attention, not only in terms of cartographic productivity but also in the correspondence between the commissioners, Batavia and the home government, meant that much importance was given to controlling the Straits of Malacca. This had political consequences with developments in the nineteenth century such as the rise of Singapore. Reimer contributed to the debate, not only with his maps, but also by adding a description of the cultivation and extraction of gambir.<sup>8</sup> He wrote several sheets about this overlooked commodity, which was locally used as a medicine, a food additive and as a dye. It would be interesting, according to Reimer, to investigate its potential profitability.

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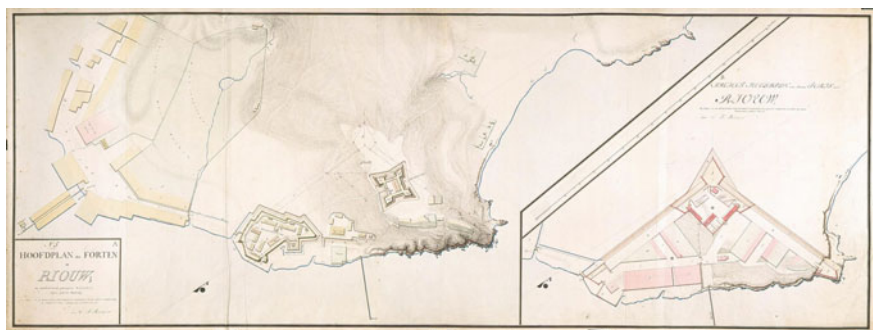
<sup>8</sup>NL-HaNa, 1.10.03, inv. nr. 87, fol. 99-104.



**Fig. 8** Maritime map of the roadstead of Riau and its sailing routes by AA Buyskes and AC Twent, 1791 (Courtesy Nationaal Archief, inv. nr. VEL0370)



**Fig. 9** Topographical map of the town and hinterland of Riau by CF Reimer, 1791 (Courtesy Nationaal Archief, inv. nr. VEL1151)



**Fig. 10** Military plan of the actual situation and projected new fortification at Riau by CF Reimer, 1791 (Courtesy Nationaal Archief, inv. nr. VEL1152)

## 7 Epilogue

Reimer's huge cartographic production was, however, of no avail. For geopolitical reasons, the deplorable state of the Dutch East India Company—which had a firm agenda in the late 1780s—could not have cared less in the year the Commission returned. The ships called at Texel in June 1793, while in February the young French Republic declared war with the Dutch Stadtholder and the King of England. All the correspondence, analyses, plans, maps and reports produced by or for the Commission were kindly received and stored away.

Alting must have been pleased with this *status quo* outcome. The activities of the Van de Graaff brothers were also neutralized. We can doubt if Alting was ever committed to fully modernizing the military defence of the Dutch East India Company. Reimer was promoted to a political position in Galle, Ceylon, which he kindly declined for lack of commercial and political skills. He wrote to Alting that he needed time to work out the sketches from the inspection tour. A year later he was promoted as Director of Fortifications and Inspector of Waterworks, overseeing the activities in the whole territory of the VOC. With a lack of spectacular results, this was probably only a 'paper promotion'. Reimer also spent time to write a voluminous report on the health situation in Batavia and unpublished notes on ancient Hindu architecture. He died in January 1796.

Reimer's cartographic legacy is enormous. He truly mapped an empire, even if only an empire in serious decline. After the French successfully invaded the Dutch Republic in early 1795, the overseas settlements were taken by the French or English, only to be restored in 1816. By this time, the maps of Carl Friedrich Reimer and the reports of the Military Commission were considered outdated. They were stored in the archives (Meilink-Roelofs et al. 1992; Balk 2007: 141–142) and were never to be examined again.



## Dedication

In loving memory of Toke Bos-Beerens. My late wife accompanied me to the Mapping Empires symposium in Oxford, September 2018. It turned out to be our final foreign journey. She died of pancreatic cancer in October 2018. Vaarwel, mijn liefste. Je was mijn grootste fan. En ik de jouwe.

## Appendix

In this appendix the Military Commission is followed chronologically. For each location, the presently known plans, maps and charts in the collections of Nationaal Archief are listed by inventory number, followed by the volume/page number of its reproduction in the facsimile series *Comprehensive Atlas of the Dutch United East India Company* (7 vols, 2006–2010), if applicable.

Date	Location	Maker(s)	Type	Inv. nr(s)	Reproduced
1789 (May–Oct); 1792–1793 (Aug–Feb)	Cape of Good Hope	AC Twent	Charts	VEL 196 (Bay of Content); VEL 197 (Bay of Algoa)	V, 342; V, 343
1789 (Dec); 1790 (Feb–Apr)	Colombo	P Elias, AA Schenk	Chart	VEL 240	IV, 100
1789 (Dec); 1790 (Feb–Apr)	Colombo	P Elias (copy after Schenk)	Plan	VEL 980	IV, 100
1789 (Dec); 1790 (Feb–Apr)	Colombo	GE Schenk (copy after Reimer); AA Buyskes (copy after Reimer)	Plans	VEL 978; VEL 979 (identical copy of VEL 978)	IV, 99; n/a
1789 (Dec); 1790 (Feb–Apr)	Colombo	B Matthijsz; GE Schenk; P Elias; CF Reitz (copies after Reimer)	Designs	VEL 974; VEL 975; VEL 976; VEL 977 A/B/C	n/a; IV, 101; n/a; n/a; IV, 102–103
1789 (Dec); 1790 (Feb–Apr)	Kotta (vicinity Colombo)	P Elias	Plan	VEL 981	IV, 122
1790 (Jan–Feb)	Cochin	AA Buyskes	Plan	VEL 907	VI, 260
1790 (Jan–Feb)	Cochin	GE Schenk (copy after Von Krause); D van Lier (copy after Von Krause)	Plans	VEL 905; VEL 906	VI, 255; VI, 256

(continued)

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Date	Location	Maker(s)	Type	Inv. nr(s)	Reproduced
1790 (Jan–Feb)	Cochin	P Elias (copy after Reimer); A Heidenreich (copy after Reimer); Van Lijnden (copy after Reimer)	Designs	VEL 908; VEL 909; VEL 910	VI, 261–263; VI, 264–266; VI, 261
1790 (Apr–Jun)	Galle	AA Buyskes; P Elias	Chart	VEL 248; VEL 249 (identical copy of VEL 248)	IV, 198–199; n/a
1790 (Apr–Jun)	Galle	CF Reimer, GE Schenk	Plan	VEL 1071	IV, 200
1790 (Apr–Jun)	Galle	P Elias (copy after Reimer); D Matthijsz (copy after Reimer); D Matthijsz (copy after Reimer); P Elias (copy after Reimer)	Designs	VEL 1065; VEL 1066; VEL 1067; VEL 1068	IV, 201; n/a; IV, 202; IV 202–203
1790 (Apr–Jun)	Designs to fortify ‘Oenewatte’ (=Unawatuna)	D Matthijsz (copy after Reimer); P Elias (copy after Reimer)	Designs	VEL 1069; VEL 1070 (identical copy of VEL 1069)	IV, 204; n/a
1790 (Jun–Aug)	Trincomalee	PJ Tency (copy after Reimer)	Plan	VEL 1025	IV, 352
1790 (Jun–Aug)	Trincomalee	GE Schenk (copy after Reimer); D Matthijsz (copy after Reimer); D Matthijsz (copy after Reimer); P Elias (copy after Reimer); PJ Tency (copy after Reimer); D Matthijsz, P Elias (copy after Reimer)	Designs	VEL 1019; VEL 1020; VEL 1021; VEL 1022; VEL 1023; VEL 1024	IV, 353; n/a; n/a; IV, 351; IV, 354–355

(continued)



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Date	Location	Maker(s)	Type	Inv. nr(s)	Reproduced
1790 (Jun–Aug)	Trincomalee (Fort Oostenburg)	DC Belcke	Plan	VEL 1044	IV, 370–371
1790 (Jun–Aug)	Trincomalee (Fort Oostenburg)	GE Schenk (copy after Reimer); D Matthijsz (copy after Reimer); P Elias (copy after Reimer)	Designs	VEL 1040; VEL 1041 (identical copy of VEL 1040); VEL 1042	IV, 372; n/a; IV, 372
1790 (Jun–Aug)	Design to cut the 'Kaalenberg' (=Ostenburg Ridge)	GE Schenk (copy after Reimer)	Design	VEL 1043	IV, 373
1790 (Sep)	Madras	CF Reimer	Plan	NA 1.10.03, inv. nr. 76	n/a
1790 (Oct); 1791 (Nov–Dec)	Malacca	AC Twent	Chart	VELH 125	III, 108
1790 (Oct); 1791 (Nov–Dec)	Malacca	CF Reimer	Plan	VEL 1112	III, 108–109
1790 (Oct); 1791 (Nov–Dec)	Malacca	P Elias (copy after Reimer)	Design	VEL 1113	III, 114–115
1791 (Feb)	Ambon	CFA Volbarth (copy after Reimer)	Chart	VEL 481	III, 276–277
1791 (Feb)	Ambon	P Elias	Map	VEL 1326	III, 275
1791 (Feb)	Ambon	CF Reimer	Map	VEL 1330	III, 282–283
1791 (Feb)	Ambon (Fort Nieuw Victoria)	CF Reimer	Plans	VEL 1331; VEL 1336; VEL1337	III, 284; III, 285; III, 285
1791 (Feb)	Ambon (lesser fortifications)	P Elias (copy after Reimer); CF Reimer	Designs	VEL 1335; VEL 1338	III, 296; III, 296
1791 (Mar–Apr)	Banda Islands	CF Reimer, AA Buyskes; MJ de Man	Chart	VEL 484; VELH 247 (identical copy of VEL 484)	III, 332–333; n/a
	Banda Islands	CF Reimer	Map	VEL 1361	III, 338
1791 (Mar–Apr)	Banda Islands (Fort Belgica)	CF Reimer	Plan	VEL 1362	III, 339

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Date	Location	Maker(s)	Type	Inv. nr(s)	Reproduced
1791 (May–Jun)	Ternate	CF Reimer	Map	VEL 478	III, 252–253
1791 (May–Jun)	Ternate (Fort Oranje)	CF Reimer	Plan	VEL 1315	III, 254
1791 (May–Jun)	Ternate (Fort Oranje)	CF Reimer	Designs	VEL 1316; VEL 1317	III, 255; III, 254
1791 (May–Jun)	Ternate (new fort ‘Kajoe Mejrah’)	CF Reimer	Design	VEL 1318	III, 256
1791 (Nov–Dec)	Makassar	CF Reimer, AA Buyskes; MJ de Man	Chart	VEL 460; VELH 544 (identical copy of VEL 460)	III, 174–175; n/a
1791 (Nov–Dec)	Makassar	CF Reimer	Plan	VEL 1309	III, 178
1791 (Nov–Dec)	Makassar	CF Reimer	Design	VEL 1308	III, 179
1791 (Dec)	Riau	AA Buyskes, AC Twent	Charts	VEL 370; VELH 206 (identical copy of VEL 370)	III, 104
1791 (Dec)	Riau	CF Reimer	Map	VEL 1151	III, 105
1791 (Dec)	Riau	CF Reimer	Design	VEL 1152	III, 106–107

Sources Zandvliet (1987), Landheer (2006), Van Diessen (2006)–2010. Updated Bos (2018)

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