

# The Wreck of the Dutch East India Company Ship *Haarlem* in Table Bay, 1647, and the Establishment of the ‘Tavern of the Seas’

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## Abstract

On Sunday 25 March 1647, shortly after five o’clock in the afternoon, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) ship *Nieuw Haarlem* or *Haarlem* wrecked in Table Bay, off the coast of South Africa. The events that followed had far-reaching consequences for the history of South Africa. 58 of the crew were repatriated by accompanying ships soon after the incident, but 62 men were left behind to try and salvage as much of the cargo as possible. They found refuge in a makeshift camp, where they lived for about one year. During their stay, the men from *Haarlem* came into contact with indigenous people. Although initially marked by apprehension and reservation, these contacts improved after some time. This led to regular bartering, visits to each other’s abodes, basic exchange of language and appreciation of each other’s cultures. Upon returning to the Netherlands, the men reported favourably of their experiences. As a result, VOC management decided to establish a much-needed stopover for their ships. This station, known as the ‘Tavern of the Seas’, later developed into the city of Cape Town. The wrecking of *Haarlem* can thus be regarded as the catalyst that created one of the roots of current multiracial and multicultural South African society.

**Key words:** *Haarlem*, Dutch East India Company, VOC, refreshment station, Tavern of the Seas, Table Bay, Cape Town, South Africa

On Sunday 25 March 1647, shortly after five o’clock in the afternoon, the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC) ship *Nieuw Haarlem* or *Haarlem* was wrecked in Table Bay, off the coast of southern Africa.<sup>1</sup> The events that followed had far-reaching consequences for the history of South Africa. 58 of the crew were repatriated by accompanying ships soon after the incident, but 62 men were left behind to try and salvage as much of the cargo as possible. They found refuge in a makeshift camp, where they lived for about one year. During their stay the men from *Haarlem* came into contact with indigenous people. Although initially marked by apprehension and reservation, these contacts improved after some time. This led to regular bartering, visits to each other’s abodes, basic exchange of language and appreciation of each other’s cultures. Upon returning to the Netherlands, the men reported favourably of their experiences. As a result, VOC management decided to establish a much-needed stopover for their ships. This station, that became known as the ‘Tavern of the Seas’, later developed into the city of Cape Town. The wreck of *Haarlem* can thus be regarded as the catalyst that created one of the roots of current multiracial and multicultural South African society.<sup>2</sup>

## Previous Stays

The temporary stay of 62 of the *Haarlem* crew was not the first such occurrence in the region. Since being sighted by Portuguese mariners towards the end of the fifteenth

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<sup>1</sup> The ship’s full name seems to have been *Nieuw Haarlem*, or *New Haarlem*. Table Bay is a large bay situated adjacent and to the north of Table Mountain. The southern part of the bay was used as an anchorage for VOC ships and those from other nations.

<sup>2</sup> A source publication of documents related to the wreck and its aftermath will be published shortly. B. Werz, *The Haarlem shipwreck (1647)*.

century, Table Bay had become a welcome stopover for Portuguese, Dutch, English, French and Scandinavian ships, plying the trade routes between Europe and Asia. During the long interoceanic voyages, it served many of them as a place of refuge, where fresh drinking water and provisions could be obtained. The oldest European name for the bay indicated this use: in 1503, the Portuguese explorer Antonio de Saldanha called it *Aguada de Saldanha* or ‘watering place of Saldanha’. In 1601, however, it was renamed Table Bay, after the abutting Table Mountain, by Dutch explorer Joris van Spilbergen.<sup>3</sup>

On 14 March 1608, the English East India Company ships *Ascension* and *Union* departed Woolwich to reach Table Bay on 9 September 1609. John Jourdain, a factor on board *Ascension*, described the first few days after their arrival as follows:

The people of the cuntrye seinge us to sett upp our tents, they removed householde and went halfe a myle farther into the woods with their famelye (...) Now knowinge that our tyme would be somthinge the longer in this place (...) therefore yt was concluded to land four peeces of ordynance, vizt. two faucons out of the *Assention* and two out of the *Unyon*, the better to prevent myscheife or assault that might be offred by those heathen people; and to that purpose we made a bulwarke with earth, and in everye corner there was placed a falcon, for feare of assaulte by night.<sup>4</sup>

This sojourn did not last long, as already on 19 September the vessels left and were dispersed by a storm the next day. *Ascension* was lost in 1609 near Surat, but Jourdain remained in Asia until he arrived back home on 19 June 1617.<sup>5</sup> In August 1611, John Saris who had sailed from the Downs on 18 April that same year as one of the officers aboard a squadron consisting of *Clove*, *Hector* and *Thomas*, reported that upon arrival in Table Bay:

I sent of Mr Cocks in my skiff to the Iland<sup>6</sup> (...) he had spoken with 9 Flemmings which 5 weakes before unhappelye weare cast away ypone the N po[in]t of the Iland. The shippes name was *Yeanger of Horne* of 900 Tonnes there voyage was for this place to make Traine oyle (...) The Flemings of the Iland came a shoare to me (...) they doubted not but to recouer there countereye, by a pinasse they would build of the rack and hoped to make a good voyage by Trayne which they purposed to lade hir with & Seales skins (...) wishing yf they doubted of there accomplishing what they had in hand wheareof I was in some doubte they being but 9 men ... . But they rather chose to trye these fortunes.<sup>7</sup>

Not surprisingly, nothing was ever heard again of the ‘9 Flemmings’, in contrast to Commander Thomas Best, who put into Table Bay with *Dragon* and *Hosiander* on 6 June 1612. Only on 28 June he ‘landed 80 or 90 sicke men, and lodged them in tents

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<sup>3</sup> Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck*, 8, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Foster (ed.), *The journal of John Jourdain*, 14–5. A falcon or falconet was a light cannon with a 4 feet long barrel that fired 1 pound shot or grapeshot.

<sup>5</sup> Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck*, 88.

<sup>6</sup> Robbeneiland. An island that indicates the northwest perimeter of Table Bay. The correct English translation would be Seal Island, but the name Robben Island has been maintained throughout South African history.

<sup>7</sup> Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck*, 51–3.

18 dayes; and they all recovered their healthes (only one that died)'. Commander Best continued his journey to the East Indies and arrived back home on 15 June 1614.<sup>8</sup> A less peaceful experience was reported by Augustin de Beaulieu, who commanded a French squadron of three ships that had left Honfleur on 2 October 1619. On Monday 16 March 1620:

I sent the longboat ashore with sails for the making of tents, and twenty-five men to guard them. I also instructed the Vice-Admiral to send twenty-five men with sails for a tent for them, and gave them orders to erect the forge. When the longboat returned its men said that they had found several human corpses, and various clothing scattered here and there, and beside the stream a small and well-flanked fort made of turf, which they thought to have been made by the Danes.<sup>9</sup>

In some cases, involuntary stays were caused by accidents, as was already indicated by the oldest known example of a shipwreck in Table Bay: *Yeanger of Horne*. During the 1640s, two more incidents occurred. Those concerned the VOC ships *Mauritius Eiland* and *Haarlem*.<sup>10</sup> *Mauritius Eiland* departed the VOC roads off the island of Texel on 4 October 1643. The first leg of the outward-bound voyage took just over four months, before the ship entered Table Bay on 7 February 1644; its crew being badly affected by scurvy. While attempting to reach the roads during the evening, the ship ran onto a rock whereby it was severely damaged. The cargo was offloaded and the ship keeled over, in an effort to close the leaks in the hull. This failed and it was decided to run the vessel ashore where it was abandoned. Around that same time they reported: 'We have set up a fort of casks, armed with one gun, and have here with us about 340 men'.<sup>11</sup> This was constructed: '... where the Danes previously had a small redoubt'.<sup>12</sup> On 22 April it was decided to reduce the size of the fort, to be defended by about 100 men and 12 heavy cannon. The sick and stores for nine months were left here as well, while the rest of the crew continued for Batavia. Those who had been left behind at the Cape were finally transferred to Batavia by *Tijger* some months later.<sup>13</sup>

Usage of Table Bay as a stopover to take in fresh provisions, drinking water and a place for the sick aboard to convalesce thus seems to have been common practice, even before the VOC established an outpost here.<sup>14</sup> Already in 1613, Thomas Aldworth suggested that a land base could be founded on the shores of Table Bay. He wrote of the merits of establishing:

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 56–7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 98. The Verserivier or Fresh River. This was a stream that ran from the slopes of Table Mountain and most passing ships collected their drinking water from it. For more on the Danes see Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck*, 91–6.

<sup>10</sup> During the period 1611–2000, 360 recorded wreckings took place in Table Bay. See Werz, *Diving up the human past*, 72–6, 200–1.

<sup>11</sup> Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck*, 157–9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 161–2.

<sup>14</sup> Various other references bear witness of this, for example: Edward Dodsworth, Nicholas Downton and John Milward (1614), Walter Peyton (1615) and Martin Pring (1616). Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck*, 63–4, 66, 69–70, 72.

a settlement at the Cape of Good Hope; which could easily be done by carrying out, each year in the ships coming here, a hundred men to leave there in passing. [...] I have never seen a better land in my life.<sup>15</sup>

Although the English East India Company decided to test the idea, no such establishment materialised. Even so, symbolic possession of the Cape and: ‘that continent not yet inhabited by any Christian prince’ was undertaken by the English in 1620.<sup>16</sup> This was of little consequence to the history of South Africa. Much more far-reaching was the establishment of a permanent foothold in the region by the Dutch in 1652.

### ***The wreck of the Haarlem***

*Haarlem* was a standard VOC return ship of about 500 tons, built in the dockyard of the Amsterdam office of the company during 1642 and 1643. The East Indiaman was named after the town of Haarlem, some 10 km west of Amsterdam. Before being wrecked in Table Bay, the vessel completed three successful voyages to the East and back.<sup>17</sup> The fourth and last outward-bound voyage of *Haarlem* commenced on 15 May 1646, when the ship left the island of Texel. After a stopover at São Tiago, Cape Verde Islands, it reached Batavia on 2 November that year. Two-and-a-half months later, on 16 January 1647, it departed from the roadstead of Batavia in the company of two other vessels. *Haarlem* carried 120 people and a cargo for Amsterdam valued at Fl. 183,018.<sup>18</sup>

Around noon on 25 March, the ship entered Table Bay, where another vessel was observed lying at anchor. As there was no wind, a skiff was lowered and the first mate and some other men were sent over to identify the ship. Around five o’clock in the afternoon a south-easterly wind picked up and turned east. Sailing close to the wind, Master Pietersz tried to tack upon reaching a water depth of 8 fathoms, but *Haarlem* did not change course. The vessel was already close to shore and battled against rough seas. Some of the foresails caught wind and forced the ship even closer to shore. *Haarlem* touched ground shortly after five o’clock and was pounded by the massive surf (Figure 1). An anchor was lowered at once to prevent the ship from being beached further but the huge waves broke the cable. The people aboard immediately fired four cannon and put lighted lanterns aft to indicate their distress to the other vessel that was lying at anchor.<sup>19</sup>

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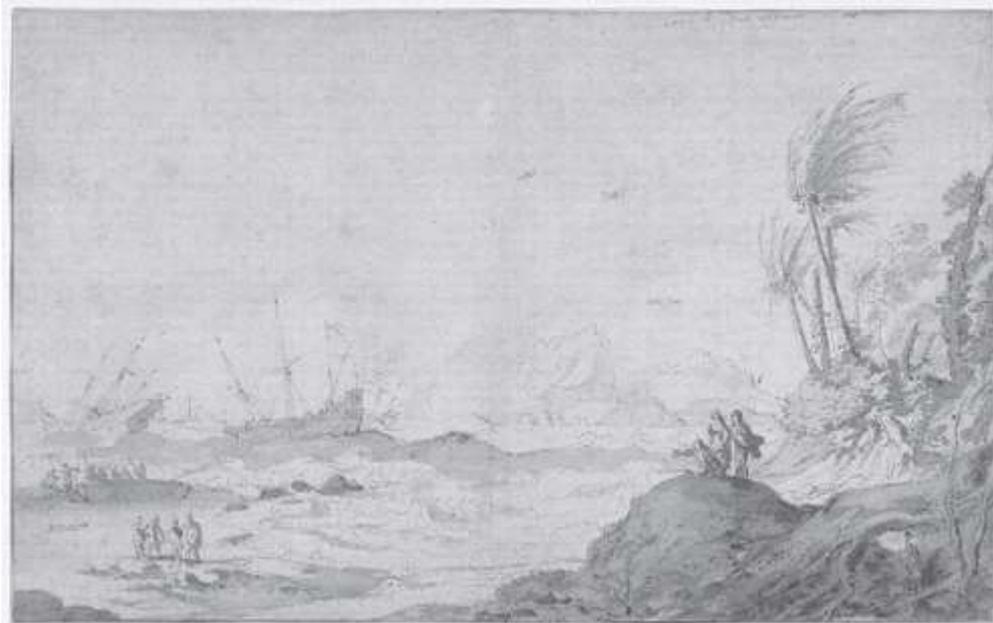
<sup>15</sup> Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck*, 61.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 105–7; Werz, *Diving up the human past*, 35–6.

<sup>17</sup> Details on *Haarlem*’s voyages can be found in Bruijn et al. (eds), *Dutch-Asiatic shipping*, II and III; Werz, *Diving up the human past*, 76–7.

<sup>18</sup> Bruijn et al. (eds), *Dutch-Asiatic shipping* III, 52–3.

<sup>19</sup> Western Cape Archives and Records Service (hereafter WCA), Cape Town, South Africa, Verbatim Copies (VC) 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz... . 1647. Journael No. 2, 2, in dato 25 March 1647.*



**Figure 1.** This drawing depicts in all likelihood the demise of *Haarlem*. It is attributed to the Flemish painter and draughtsman Bonaventura Peeters the Elder (\*1614 †1652). Peeters was a leading marine artist in the Low Countries during the first half of the seventeenth century. Of specific interest is the smaller beached vessel and the chest or crates in the foreground. The journal of Leendert Jansz reports that on 26 March 1647, the skiff from the accompanying *Witte Olifant* went adrift and was cast on the beach and severely damaged. The transfer of goods and people from *Haarlem* started the day following. Based on these details, the drawing probably represents the situation on 27 March 1647 or very soon thereafter. (Pen and brown ink, with gray wash, 265 x 425 mm. Reproduced with kind permission of the John and Marine van Vlissingen Foundation, the Netherlands).

The following day, the place of foundering was described as: ‘approximately a musket-shot away from the shore near a sandy beach 1.5 miles from the Table Bay’.<sup>20</sup> It was found that the vessel was firmly lodged in sand. In the meantime, the mate, who had been despatched to identify the ship that lay at anchor in the roads, returned and reported that it was *Witte Olifant* that had arrived on 22 March.<sup>21</sup> Soon thereafter, the master of *Witte Olifant*, Cornelis Claesz Spranck, arrived with two smaller vessels, a skiff and a longboat.<sup>22</sup> These, together with the skiff and the longboat from *Haarlem* were used in an attempt to free the ship, but according to Leendert Jansz this: ‘was as likely as counting the stars’.<sup>23</sup> The skiff from *Haarlem* was taken on board again, but the two bigger longboats could not approach due to the heavy swell and had to be anchored. In the meantime, *Haarlem* seemed to be getting closer to the shore and the people on board were afraid that the heavy seas would break her up completely. The skiff of *Witte Olifant* that had been tied to *Haarlem*’s side became loose and was severely damaged when it was thrown on to the beach. In an attempt to collect his skiff, Master Spranck boarded the skiff from *Haarlem*, but this small vessel nearly capsized in the strong surf, causing serious injuries to his arms and legs.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 3, 26 March 1647. ‘a musket-shot away’ indicates an approximate distance of no more than 60 metres. See Harding, *Encyclopedie van wapens*, 119; Although the accident happened in Table Bay the phrase: ‘from the Table Bay’ indicates the position in relation to the old roadstead that was used by VOC ships and others.

<sup>21</sup> The mate referred to here is First Mate Claes Winckels.

<sup>22</sup> The name of the master of *Witte Olifant* can be deduced from WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz... 1647. No. 2, 3–4, in dato 26 March 1647.*

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

The next day, 27 March 1647, some ammunition and clothing were sent to a small group of people who had managed to reach the shore. To this purpose, the small skiff from *Haarlem* and some casks were connected to the ship with ropes to be hauled back on board in the case of an accident, or if the skiff and casks were brought ashore the people aboard would have a means of getting to safety. Around noon, *Haarlem's* longboat was sent to the beach together with First Mate Cornelis Wallis and some other men, including two carpenters and their tools, to build a tent.<sup>25</sup> The boat was swamped by the swelling surf and the men had to jump off to save their lives. One of the carpenters, who could not swim, drowned. That same day, a start was made on the transfer of some of the cargo from the wreck to the shore. Towards evening, two English ships that could not reach the roadstead in Table Bay due to an adverse southerly wind were observed.<sup>26</sup>

During the morning of the following day, the English ships that had come from Banten, near Batavia, anchored in the roads. Deputy-Commander Reijnier van 't Zum sent them a missive, requesting their assistance by providing some smaller vessels for the transportation of goods and people and to take on board 40 of the *Haarlem* crew for St Helena, to wait there for other VOC ships.<sup>27</sup> On 29 March, two longboats from the English vessels and the longboat from *Witte Olifant* came alongside. They transferred a quantity of mace, 82 bales of camphor and about 80 bales of cinnamon to *Witte Olifant* in two trips. On 30 March, the two English ships set sail, taking with them approximately 40 of the *Haarlem* crew. Around midday, another ship neared the shore, but due to an adverse wind, it had to cast anchor outside the roadstead. The next day the weather was fine, but sea conditions had worsened. Because it was impossible to use the smaller boats, Deputy-Commander van 't Zum went ashore on two empty vats. Upon reaching the beach he assembled some of the crew of the *Witte Olifant* in order to: 'assist in the construction of a fortification on top of a small hill in the vicinity of our ship'.<sup>28</sup> This was to accommodate some of the people from the *Haarlem*, whose major task was to recover goods from the wreck. On 1 April, the unidentified ship that had appeared two days previously turned out to be *Schiedam*, which had left Batavia in the company of *Witte Olifant* and *Haarlem* some months previously, and the officers of the three ships held a general meeting, or Broad Council. During this meeting, it was decided that Junior Merchant Leendert Jansz, who described the events concerning the wrecking of *Haarlem* and subsequent events, and First Mate Claes Winckels, together with 60 others would stay behind.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Events during the period April 1647 – March 1648***

That same day work started on the fortification. A day later, the people from *Haarlem* and *Witte Olifant*, who had started to build accommodation on shore, were assisted by some men from *Schiedam*. They managed to find fresh water after digging a deep well and recovered some sacks of pepper that had been thrown into the sea from the

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<sup>25</sup> It is highly likely that Cornelis Wallis was the first mate of *Witte Olifant* and that he had taken over as commanding officer of this ship from the seriously injured Master Cornelis Spranck on 26 March.

<sup>26</sup> WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz. No. 2, 4, in dato 27 March 1647.*

<sup>27</sup> Bruijn et al. refer to Reinier van 't Zum and state that this person was on board *Witte Olifant*. This is correct for the leg from the Cape to the Dutch Republic. From the first entry in Leendert Jansz's journal, under the date 25 March 1647, it is clear that Van 't Zum left Batavia on board *Haarlem*. Bruijn et al. (eds), *Dutch-Asiatic shipping III*, 52–3.

<sup>28</sup> WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz. No. 2, 5, in dato 31 March 1647.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 25 March 1647.

wreck.<sup>30</sup> In the meantime, two tents were pitched to accommodate salvaged goods as well as the people who were working on land. On 5 April, an iron cannon from the wreck was brought ashore and the people from *Witte Olifant* and *Schiedam* were dismissed, as there were obviously too many hands on the beach, and it was envisaged that the fortification could be completed by the *Haarlem* crew.<sup>31</sup>

During the first half of April 1647, building work on the fortification and the transfer of goods and people continued. On 12 April, *Witte Olifant* and *Schiedam*, under the command of Jeremias van Vliet, left for the Dutch Republic, taking with them some of the salvaged goods from *Haarlem*.<sup>32</sup> On their arrival in the Netherlands between 9 and 10 August 1647, Reijnier van 't Zum, Master Pietersz from *Haarlem* and the officers from *Witte Olifant* and *Schiedam*, informed the management of the VOC of the fate of the ship and its crew in detail.<sup>33</sup> About a month-and-a-half later the most senior VOC official in Asia, Governor-General Cornelis van der Lijn, and the councillors of India in Batavia were also informed of the incident by the VOC ship *Tijger* that had arrived there on 24 October 1647.<sup>34</sup> During the days following the departure of *Witte Olifant* and *Schiedam*, more goods were salvaged, including oriental textiles, pepper, indigo, sugar and porcelain. Due to bad weather, which resulted in heavy swells, the wreck of the *Haarlem* was pushed closer to shore and was in great danger of breaking up. The pumps on board were manned day and night in order to keep the hulk afloat. During the night of 17 to 18 April, the ship was lifted over a sandbank and deposited in very shallow water, leaving only 3 feet of water underneath the bowsprit at low tide.<sup>35</sup>

Although salvage work continued, the condition of the wreck deteriorated rapidly. The recovery of goods became more and more difficult due to severe leaks in the hull. During the night of 6 to 7 May, the wreck moved even closer to the shore and efforts to reduce the water level inside the hull were intensified. More pepper and 97 chests of sugar from Candy were saved before the ship finally burst during the early morning of 10 May.<sup>36</sup> As a result, the pumps became clogged with sand and the water level increased. On the next day, a store was erected on the beach in between the fortification and the wreck to facilitate the off-loading of goods.<sup>37</sup>

Some more pepper was salvaged on 15 May. A hole was hacked in the orlop deck, as the combustion of the perishables in the hold consisting mainly of pepper and sugar, caused an unbearable toxic stench that prevented people from working below deck. The hole was enlarged two days later and a further quantity of pepper, some bales of cinnamon and five barrels containing bread were brought ashore.<sup>38</sup> On 18 May, it was reported that:

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<sup>30</sup> Details of this well are mentioned in Raven-Hart, *Before Van Riebeeck*, 170. They were taken from Hondius, *Klare besgryving van Cabo de Bona Esperanca*.

<sup>31</sup> WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz. No. 2, 5–7, in dato 1–5 April 1647*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–8, 8 and 12 April 1647; *ibid.*, *Origineele missive doorden ondercoopman Leendert Jansz, aen d'Ed[ele] H[eren] Bewinthebberden der Vereenichde Nederlantsche geotroijeerde oostindische Comp[agnie] ter vergaderinge van Zeventhienen tot Amsterdam. No. 1, 2, in dato 14 September 1647*.

<sup>33</sup> [http://resources.huylgens.knaw.nl/das/index\\_html\\_en](http://resources.huylgens.knaw.nl/das/index_html_en) under *Witte Olifant and Schiedam*.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, under *Tijger*. India in this context must be interpreted as the Dutch East Indies.

<sup>35</sup> WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz. No. 2, 7–8, in dato 12–18 April 1647*. Three Amsterdam feet equals approx. 0,85 m.

<sup>36</sup> Candy on the island of Ceylon or Sri Lanka.

<sup>37</sup> WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz. No. 2, 10–11, in dato 7, 9–11 May 1647*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, *in dato 15–17 May 1647*.

Three Strantloopers, inhabitants of these parts, appeared near our fortification. We ordered them to halt at a distance of one musket-shot from our place. They promised to bring us cattle and we gave them a quantity of bread and some tobacco.<sup>39</sup>

The Strandlopers appeared again the following day, bringing with them some rock lobsters or crayfish (*Jasus lalandii*) that were bartered for tobacco and bread (Figure 2). The Europeans, however, were especially looking forward to the promised cattle, as they had not enjoyed fresh provisions for a long time.<sup>40</sup>



**Figure 2.** Late seventeenth-century copper engraving of an indigenous couple at the Cape of Good Hope. These people were originally named Hottentotten by the Dutch, after the sounds they uttered while dancing. From: Henri Abraham Chatelain, *Coutumes moeurs &c habillemens des peuples qui habitent aux environs du Cap de Bonne Esperance avec une description des animaux et reptiles qui se trouvent dans ce pais* (1719), in Henri A. Chatelain., *Atlas historique, ou, Nouvelle introduction à l'histoire, à la chronologie & à la géographie ancienne & moderne* (Amsterdam 1705-20). This was copied from an earlier engraving that was published in Guy Tachard, *Voyage de Siam* (Paris, 1686) (Author's collection).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 11–2, in dato 18 May 1647.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 12, in dato 19 May 1647.

On 23 May, seven or eight men were granted permission to sail to Robben Island.<sup>41</sup> This was probably to reconnoitre the island and to look for fresh food supplies. They returned the next day, bringing with them 130 penguins (*Spheniscus demersus*) and ‘zeeduijckers’, probably cormorants (*Phalacrocorax capensis*). In the meantime, those men who had stayed behind fired five cannon shots at the stern or back section of *Haarlem* to pierce the hull in order to ventilate the cargo hold. This proved to be successful, as the following day a quantity of pepper was brought ashore. More pepper was landed on 27 May and the store on the beach was covered with a sail. Some planks from chests used to transport sugar were collected the next day for the building of a defensive wall as part of the fortification.<sup>42</sup> On 1 June the men from the *Haarlem* were visited again by some indigenous people. Leendert Jansz described their encounter as follows:

After noon, 13 Strandloopers appeared at our fortification, inhabitants of these parts. Went to them with some of our men and found out that one of the 13 spoke English very well. They offered us 5 sheep, in lieu of which we gave them some pieces of yellow copper.<sup>43</sup> The same Strandloopers tried very hard to talk us into allowing them to visit our fortification or our ship, but we could not allow this as we were fully aware how hostile they had been towards Mister Van 't Zum and the crew from the ship *Maurittius* [*sic*]. For this reason, we told them not to approach our fortification any closer, which was at a distance of approximately one musket-shot, which they did not like and they left discontented.<sup>44</sup>

In the weeks following, more goods were salvaged from the wreck of *Haarlem*. On 15 June, some of the men shot a rhinoceros that had been fighting with an elephant close to the fortification. Its meat was palatable and was a change from their monotonous diet. Another party of seven or eight men went to Robben Island and returned the next day with 800 eggs and 200 birds, mostly penguins. A few days later, a small craft built by the survivors was transported to the Salt River, together with a net to catch fish, the intention being to leave the equipment behind at the river mouth so that fishing could take place at any time. That same evening, 117 fish were caught, with a further 240 the next day.<sup>45</sup>

On 27 June, another storm picked up and continued into the next day. As a result, the wreck started to list on to its side. Weather conditions deteriorated and on 7 July, it was reported that hail fell and that part of the stern of the wreck had collapsed. To protect the salvaged cargo from the elements, the pepper tent on the beach was treated with pitch and whale oil, as tar was not available. Some remains of the cargo from the wreck were salvaged intermittently and food supplies were replenished with fish from the Salt River. On 10 August, some of the men went to the Salt River to repair the nets and upon their return they reported that they had encountered a group of approximately 50 Strandlopers, consisting of men, women and children. It seems,

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<sup>41</sup> An island that indicates the northwest perimeter of Table Bay.

<sup>42</sup> WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz. No. 2, 13, in dato 24–25 and 27–28 May 1647.*

<sup>43</sup> The indigenous man that spoke English was a Strandloper or Goringhaikona who later acted as an interpreter for the Dutch, who called him Harry or Herry. This man had visited the Dutch East Indies previously on board an English ship.

<sup>44</sup> WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz. No. 2, 13–4, in dato 1 June 1647.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–5, *in dato* 11, 15–16, 20–21 June 1647.

however, that during the winter months nothing much happened, as the entries in Leendert Jansz's journal for this period refer mainly to the weather conditions and the amount of fish caught. This situation changed during the evening of 23 August, when a ship sailed into Table Bay.<sup>46</sup>

The next day, Jansz and 12 of his men went overland to the vessel. It turned out to be the VOC ship *Tijger* from the chamber of Amsterdam. Shortly afterwards, *Henriette Louise* and *Noord Munster* from the Zeeland office also arrived in the roadstead.<sup>47</sup> The outward-bound *Tijger* had left the roads at Texel on 7 May 1647 and met up with *Henriette Louise* and *Noord Munster* some time later. The ships sailed in convoy for part of the journey and entered Table Bay together on 24 August.<sup>48</sup> The crew of the *Haarlem* must have received them with much joy, as no other ships had been observed since the departure of *Witte Olifant* and *Schiedam* on 12 April. During these four and a half months, the 62 people from *Haarlem* endured many difficulties.

Salvage activities on the wreck were carried out with great effort and under extreme conditions, while the weather was often terrible. Initial contacts with local indigenous people were made and although these did not result in conflict, there must have been an air of suspicion and mistrust between both groups, often overridden by feelings of curiosity.

Jansz obviously spent the night on board one of the ships and returned to the camp the next day. On 26 August he requested the commanding officers of the ships to send some commissioners for an inspection. Two days later, the commissioners arrived at the fortification and were shown the camp and the Company's goods that had been salvaged from the shipwreck. That same day one of the sailors who had stayed in the camp, Carel Cartoijns, was killed when his musket exploded.<sup>49</sup> The commissioners, consisting of two merchants and the master of one of the VOC vessels, prepared a detailed report that gives a good impression of the way in which the fortification was constructed. The commissioners also referred to the wreck of the *Haarlem*, stating that the vessel had been cast very close to the 'dry' beach by the surf.<sup>50</sup> It seemed that the people from the *Haarlem* had given their abode a name, as the report was dated 29 August 1647, 'Int fort Zandenburch', translated as 'In the fort Sand Castle'.<sup>51</sup>

That day, Jansz and the commissioners went to the ships that were lying at anchor in the roadstead to report to the Broad Council of officers. He requested that *Noord Munster* delay its departure, probably to load the salvaged cargo from *Haarlem* and to assist in the recovery of four cannon and a quantity of rope that were still on board the wreck.<sup>52</sup> After some debate, this request was turned down. The next day, Jansz, accompanied by the merchant of *Noord Munster* and the junior merchant of *Henriette Louise*, returned to the camp where they informed the survivors of the *Haarlem* that they could go on board the waiting ships and leave for Batavia should they so wish. Those who left were to be replaced by crew members from the other

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 15, in dato 17 June until 23 August 1647.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 20, in dato 23–24 August 1647.

<sup>48</sup> [http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/das/index\\_html\\_en](http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/das/index_html_en) under *Tijger, Henriette Louise* and *Noord Munster*; WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz*. No. 2, 20, in dato 24 August 1647.

<sup>49</sup> WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz*. No. 2, 20–1, in dato 25–28 August 1647.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., *Rapport bij den oppercoopman Jacob Husaert, schipper Thomas Mendonca, en ondercoopman Dickx gedaen op haeren visite vant [ver]ongelucte schip Haerlem No. 6, 34, in dato 29 August 1647.*

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., No. 2, 21, in dato 29 August 1647.

ships. Only two people, Steward Willem Willemsen and Able Seaman Isack Carlier, who wanted to extend their period of service, took advantage of this opportunity.<sup>53</sup>

On 31 August, the merchants who had visited fort Zandenburch walked back to where their ships lay at anchor. Five people from the camp also went to the ships by boat to collect various items that could be of use. On 1 September, the two men who were to sail to Batavia were transferred and some documentation was handed over to the commanding officers of the three VOC vessels. That same day, one of the crew of *Noord Munster* was beaten to death by Strandlopers.<sup>54</sup> During the evening of 3 September, the crews of *Noord Munster*, *Henriette Louise* and *Tijger* started preparing to depart during the night or early morning. Leendert Jansz, who at the time was on board one of the vessels, took his leave early in the evening and was dropped at the mouth of Salt River by *Tijger*'s skiff. He arrived at the camp at approximately 11.00 p.m. The following day, Jansz sent some people to the Salt River to collect goods that he had buried there the previous evening, as he could not carry them to the fortification. The three ships could still be seen from the shore, as they had not been able to leave Table Bay due to adverse winds. Finally, on 5 September, *Tijger* and *Henriette Louise* left under sail, followed the day after by *Noord Munster*.<sup>55</sup>

On 7 September, eight or nine cows were observed close to the fortification. Some men were sent after them and three of the animals were shot and brought into the camp. Some of the woodwork on the wreck of the *Haarlem* was dismantled to reinforce the tents. Three days later reference was made to the repairing and tarring of the tents, and a ship that could not reach the roadstead due to lack of wind was observed. During the night of 10 to 11 September, this vessel entered Table Bay and Jansz went to visit it. It was *Sun*, belonging to the English East India Company en route from Mauritius to England. Jansz returned to the fortification accompanied by five officers and three crewmembers from the *Sun*. The English returned overland to their ship two days later.<sup>56</sup> The next day, 14 September: 'Approximately 20 Strandlopers appeared here, including one who spoke English. They requested to live near our fortification but we can not yet approve of this'.<sup>57</sup> This entry in the journal of Leendert Jansz is one of the oldest historical records referring to the possibility of peaceful coexistence between indigenous people and Europeans in southern Africa.

Shortly thereafter, and possibly even on the same day, *Sun* must have left for England. Proof of this is that the last entry in Jansz's journal of daily events is dated 14 September. In addition, several documents sent with *Sun* and destined for the board of directors of the VOC was compiled that day. These documents were handed to the commanding officers of *Sun*, who forwarded them to the VOC offices in Amsterdam on their return to England.<sup>58</sup> Little is known of what happened during the later period, from 15 September 1647 until the people from the *Haarlem* were finally rescued by a returning fleet that arrived during the course of March 1648.<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, this second part of Leendert Jansz's journal has not yet been traced and it seems to be missing from the Dutch, South African and Indonesian national archives.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 21–2, in dato 29 and 30 August 1647; *ibid.*, *Rolle der parsoonen ...* . No. 4, 29, s.d.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., No. 2, 22, in dato 1 and 2 September 1647.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 23, in dato 3–6 September 1647.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 23–4, in dato 7, 10–11 and 13 September 1647.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 24, in dato 14 September 1647.

<sup>58</sup> WCA, VC 284, *Register vande brieven en papiere van Cabo de Bona Esperance met het Engelsch schip de Son overgecome*, 41–2.

<sup>59</sup> de Jong, 'De reis van de retourvloot', 7, 15.

### *Repatriation of the crew*

It must have been a terrific sight for the men from *Haarlem* when nearly a year after the foundering of their ship, numerous sails were spotted on the horizon. It was the returning fleet from Batavia for the year 1648, under the command of Wollebrant Geleijnssen or Geleijnsz de Jongh (Figure 3).<sup>60</sup> During the course of 8 to 19 March, 12 richly laden ships with about 1,566 seafarers, soldiers and passengers entered the roadstead and dropped anchor.<sup>61</sup> Among them were *Tijger*, *Henriette Louise* and *Noord Munster* that had visited the stranded crew previously, during the period August-September 1647.<sup>62</sup>



**Figure 3.** Oil painting depicting the VOC returning fleet from Batavia under the command of Wollebrant Geleijnssen or Geleijnsz de Jongh that reached Table Bay in March 1648. From left to right: the flute *Koning van Polen*; the return ship *Zutphen*; the flute *Noordmunster*; the return ships *Tijger* and *Rotterdam*; the flagship *Walvis*; and *Vrede*, *Oranje*, *Enkhuizen*, *Westfriesland*, *Delft* and *Henriette Louise*. The painting was executed by an unknown artist possibly around 1674. (Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar, inv. nr. 20636. Reproduced with permission from the Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar).

The documents that Commander De Jongh produced during his stay at the Cape until his return home contain detailed information that may well have supported the initiative to establish a refreshment station on the shores of Table Bay. An example of this is a letter he wrote to the directors of the VOC on 23 April 1648 while

<sup>60</sup> Wollebrant Geleijnssen, Geleynssen or Geleijnsz de Jongh returned to the Dutch Republic after a successful career with the VOC, from 1612 to 1648. Among the positions he occupied were director of the Company's stations in Persia and Surat, on the north-west coast of India, as well as councillor of India.

<sup>61</sup> Nationaal Archief (hereafter NA), The Hague, *Collectie Wollebrant Geleynse de Jong* 1.10.30, *Notitie hoeveel gegaiëerde en ongegaiëerde personen de presente retourvloote [...] sterck is ...; Ibid., Missive van Wollebrant Geleynse de Jongh aan gouverneur-generaal en raden in Batavia met een verslag van de retourreis onder zijn bevel van Batavia naar Kaap de Goede Hoop en het verblijf aldaar, in dato 3 april 1648.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* The other ships were: the flagship *Walvis* with De Jongh on board, the flute *Koning van Polen*, *Zutphen*, *Rotterdam*, *Vrede*, *Oranje*, *Enkhuizen*, *West Friesland* and *Delft*.

his ship was lying at anchor on the roadstead of St Helena.<sup>63</sup> In this, he stated that it had not been possible to obtain cattle at the Cape and the only provisions that could be secured were some vegetables. As a result of this, he had been forced to call at St Helena, even though the governor-general and council in Batavia had strongly recommended that he would sail directly from the Cape to the Dutch Republic.

De Jongh also provided details of the goods that had been salvaged from the wreck of the *Haarlem* by Leendert Jansz and his men and how these were loaded aboard the fleet. They included: 272,762 pounds of pepper, 144 bales and six bags with cinnamon, 100 chests with sugar, 109 bales with Guinea textiles, 140 tubs with porcelain of which much was damaged and seven chests with indigo.<sup>64</sup> A comparison between the quantities of the goods listed by him and those previously registered by Leendert Jansz indicates that very little had been salvaged between 14 September 1647 and 3 April 1648.<sup>65</sup> With the assistance of the men from the return fleet some cannon could be taken from the wreck. A total of 19 iron cannon and four anchors had to be left behind in the hulk as they proved too heavy to be salvaged, as well as some cables and rope work.<sup>66</sup>

The men immediately started loading the salvaged goods. To that purpose, carts were made to transport the various items from fort *Zandenburch* and the wreck of the *Haarlem* to the mouth of the Salt River. From there, the goods were loaded aboard ship's boats and transferred to the waiting ships. When everything that could be salvaged had been removed, the wreck was set alight to reduce the risk to other vessels that would enter Table Bay.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, during this time some of the soldiers from the fleet that accompanied the carts shot and butchered 15 or 16 head of cattle from the indigenous people. This incident was regarded in a serious light by Commander de Jongh, who reported it to the governor-general and his council in Batavia. In his letter, he warned of possible retribution by the indigenous people.<sup>68</sup> This must have been quite a blow for Leendert Jansz and his men, as over time and with much diplomacy they had managed to gain the confidence of the locals.

On 3 April 1648, the fleet continued its voyage with the men from *Haarlem* aboard. As insufficient fresh provisions had been obtained at the Cape, it was decided to sail to St Helena, which was reached on 21 April. Although according to de Jongh enough vegetables could be obtained there, the commander reported that there was a shortage of fresh meat due to the irresponsible behaviour of the crews of other ships. Animals had been hunted on a large scale, while dogs that had been left behind had decimated the remainder. The return voyage continued on 5 May 1648 and the last leg took just over three months. During this period, the number of sick and dead increased. Many of these were a direct result of the lack of fresh provisions. Commander de Jongh reported after his return that in total more than 130 people in the fleet had died. Finally, during the course of 7 and 8 August, the vessels entered the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., *Missive van Wollebrant Geleynse de Jongh aan Heren XVII, geschreven op de rede van St. Helena en meegegeven aan het Engelse schip Eagle, in dato 23 April 1648.*

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., *Missive van Wollebrant Geleynse de Jongh aan gouverneur-generaal en raden in Batavia ..., in dato 3 April 1648.*

<sup>65</sup> WCA, VC 284, *Journal and letters of Leendert Jansz. Notitie vande coopmans[goederen] die uijt 't verongeluckte schip Haerlem alhier aen Cabo de Bona Esperance in salvo sijn. No. 3.*

<sup>66</sup> NA, *Collectie Wollebrant Geleynse de Jong 1.10.30, Missive van Wollebrant Geleynse de Jongh aan gouverneur-generaal en raden in Batavia ..., in dato 3 April 1648.*

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.; de Jong, 'De reis van de retourvloot', 9–10, 16.

roadsteads of Texel and Goeree safely and de Jongh was presented with a golden chain and pendant to commemorate the event (Figure 4).<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 4.** Wollebrant Geleijnsz de Jongh, the commander of the return fleet that saved the men from *Haarlem* in 1648. The painting was ordered by De Jongh and intended for the Alkmaar orphanage where he and his two brothers stayed after becoming orphans in 1611. The painting was executed by Caesar van Everdingen in 1673–4. It shows De Jongh holding his baton of office and wearing the gold chain and commemorative medal that was given to him by the VOC as a token of appreciation for his services. The returning fleet can be seen in the background. (Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar, inv.nr. 20926. Reproduced with permission from the Stedelijk Museum Alkmaar).

It is highly likely that Leendert Jansz, Claes Winckels and possibly some other people from *Haarlem* were questioned in detail by a committee of officials from the Amsterdam office of the VOC on their return. After all, the men could provide firsthand information on the events that had happened since the foundering of their ship. One of the issues that was most likely addressed concerned the cause of the accident and whether anyone was to blame. Other questions probably related to the salvaged cargo and the observations that were made during the involuntary stay on the shore of Table Bay. When the committee was finally satisfied, their findings were reported to the VOC management. At about the same time or even earlier, Leendert Jansz expanded on the idea to establish a much-needed refreshment station for ships in the region. With his firsthand experience of the area of the Cape, he was in a position of authority to make such recommendations. This resulted in a formal proposal or *Remonstrantie* that was presented to the Amsterdam office on Monday 26 July 1649. The following year, the document was brought to the attention of the VOC

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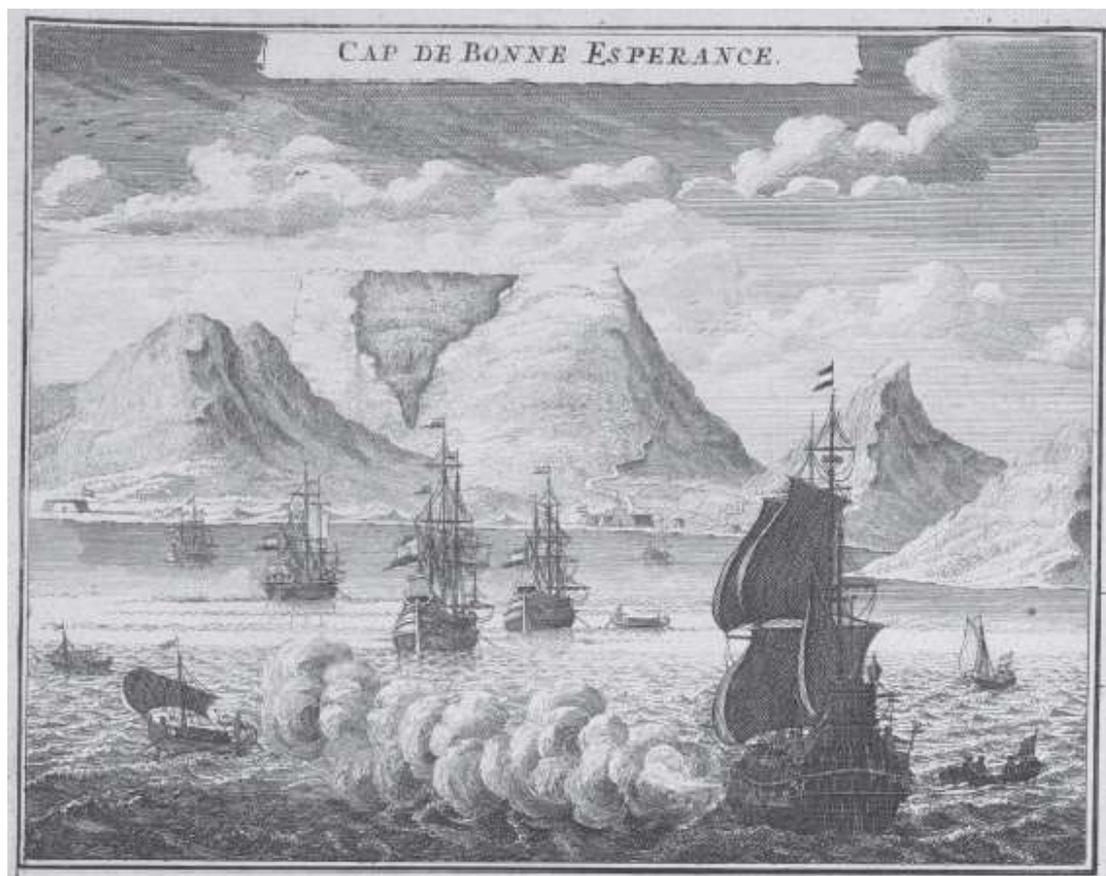
<sup>69</sup> de Jong, 'De reis van de retourvloot', 12–4.

directors. This led to the decision to establish a refreshment station on the shores of Table Bay that later became known as ‘the Tavern of the Seas’.<sup>70</sup>

### *Conclusions*

Intentional and permanent European presence in the South African region commenced on 6 and 7 April 1652. During the course of these two days, three VOC ships dropped anchor in Table Bay. The people on board *Dromedaris*, *Reiger* and *Goede Hoop* had been tasked to establish a provisioning or refreshment station at the foot of Table Mountain. The station was to serve passing ships of the Dutch East India Company that plied the trade routes between the Dutch Republic and Asia.<sup>71</sup>

The arrival of these pioneers, of whom some can be regarded as the first white South Africans as they spent the rest of their lives here, was no coincidence (Figure 5). The whole operation was a well-orchestrated event, as were many other projects that the VOC undertook during the nearly two centuries of its existence. The building of the refreshment station had far-reaching consequences and a considerable impact on South African history. In fact, to some extent it can be regarded as the beginning of this country’s modern multiracial and multicultural society. This all started with the wreck of *Haarlem*.



**Figure 5.** View of the Cape of Good Hope during the second half of the seventeenth century. In the background can be seen Table Mountain flanked by Devil’s Peak (l.) and Lion’s Head (r.). At the foot of the mountains is the second official Dutch fort or castle and gardens where fruit and vegetables were grown to supply passing ships. A VOC fleet is approaching the roadstead, accompanied by some smaller local vessels.

<sup>70</sup> Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, 273; Bruijn et al. (eds), *Dutch-Asiatic shipping I*, 109.

<sup>71</sup> Thom (ed.), *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 20–2.

The ship in the foreground is firing a cannon to signal their arrival. (From Guy Tachard, *Voyage de Siam* (Paris, 1686) (Author's collection).

Even though the shipwreck of the *Haarlem* is of major importance to the history of South Africa, this event has hardly received the attention it deserves. Until relatively recently, no comprehensive archival research into the history of this ship was undertaken. This will be rectified soon with publication of a new book on the subject.<sup>72</sup> Over the years, several people have been searching for the wreck and survivor camp but without success. The only published report on these activities was by Mervyn Emms in 1975.<sup>73</sup> Since the 1990s a research programme has been underway that aims to locate the wreck and fort Zandenburch but as yet they have not been located with any certainty.<sup>74</sup> A geophysical survey completed at the end of 2016 indicated some very promising signs and once the required permits are in place the search for the wreck will continue.

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<sup>72</sup> Werz, *The Haarlem shipwreck (1647)*.

<sup>73</sup> Emms, 'In the wreck of the Haerlem', 18–9.

<sup>74</sup> This has been reported upon in several publications, including: Werz, *Diving up the human past*, 76–87; Werz, 'In search of the *Nieuw Haarlem*', 61-3; Werz, *The Haarlem shipwreck (1647)*; and Werz, Steenkamp and Prowse, 'The United Dutch East India Company (VOC) ship *Haarlem* (1647)'.

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