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The Illusion of Verisimilitude:
Johan Nieuhof's Images of China

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Johan Nieuhof, *Forbidden City*, 1658, drawing, Bibliothèque Nationale de France

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Acknowledgements

During the first Dutch envoy's visit to China between 1655 and 1657, Johan Nieuhof (1617-1672) made many drawings of Chinese cities, towns, rivers, landscapes, Chinese people and their costumes, Chinese customs and so forth. The engravings of China, which were produced on the basis of these drawings, have been explored by various scholars from different perspectives. Nieuhof's work showed European people what China looked like, and thus raised their expectations of this fanciful country. It also greatly influenced the Chinoiserie fashion in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. By tackling Nieuhof's opus I have aimed to shed new light on the illustrations of Dutch printed travelogues, a genre which bloomed in the seventeenth century along with the Dutch exploration in the world. To gain a deeper understanding of these issues, I have focused my research on the text and the drawings of the illustrated travelogue (the Paris manuscript) that Nieuhof personally offered to the Gentlemen XVII after his return from China and the illustrations of the first Dutch printed edition edited by his brother Hendrick and published by Jacob van Meurs in Amsterdam in 1665. By focusing on the discussion of Nieuhof's images of China, I have endeavoured to sketch a broader understanding, not only of the image of China in Europe, the "naar het leven" (from life) pictorial convention in the seventeenth century, but also of the complicated relationship between Nieuhof's images of China and Chinoiserie.

Owing to certain unexpected difficulties, it took me much longer time than I had anticipated finishing this research, but thanks to the intervention

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of several persons whose names I mention below, the final months ‘passed like an arrow’.

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Introduction

I. The significance of Nieuhof's book on China

It [*Het Gezantschap*] is, as people well know, the earliest and most reliable source on China in the seventeenth century and is still very valuable even today. (Het is, gelijk men weet, de meest vroegtijdige en trouwste bron over het China der zeventiende eeuw, nog op waarde geschat in de tegenwoordige.)¹

—J. T. Bodel Nijenhuis

In the years 1655 to 1657, the first Dutch envoy's visit to China was commissioned by the Dutch East India Company (VOC), its primary task being to negotiate trading privileges in China.² Although this visit did not achieve the expected goals, the publication of the account of the embassy's experience by Johan Nieuhof (1618–1672, see fig. 1) was an undoubted triumph.³ His work not only helped satisfy the seventeenth-century European longing for knowledge of China and stimulated people's curiosity about this mysterious country, but it also exercised significant influence on the development of European art, especially chinoiserie, in the late

¹ See J. T. Bodel Nijenhuis, "Johan Nieuhof," *Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde* 3 (1864): 36.

² On the background and process of this envoy visit, see Margery Corbett, "The Dutch Mission to Peking in 1655," *Quaerendo* 16 (1986): 131–36; also see Leonard Blussé and Reindert Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657* (Middelburg: Stichting VOC Publicaties, 1987), 14.

³ The result of this embassy visit has been discussed by many scholars, see Henriette Rahusen-de Bruyn Kops, "Not Such an 'Unpromising Beginning': The First Dutch Trade Embassy to China, 1655–1657," *Modern Asian Studies* 36: 3 (2002): 535–578. Also see Leonard Blussé, "No Boats to China: The Dutch East India Company and The Changing Pattern of The China Sea Trade, 1635–1690," *Modern Asian Studies* 30:1 (1996): 51–70.

seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁴ The first edition was published in Amsterdam by the bookseller and art dealer Jacob van Meurs (1619–1680) in 1665,⁵ as *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen Keize van China: waar in de gedenkwaardighste Geschiedenissen, die onder het reizen door de Sineesche Landtschappen [. . .] sedert den jare 1655 tot 1657 zijn voorgevallen [. . .] verhandelt worden. Beneffens Een Naukeurige Beschrijving der Sineesche Steden, Dorpen, Regeeing, Wetenschappen, Hantwerken, Zeden, Godsdiensten, Gebouwen, Drachten, Schepen, Bergen, Gewassen, Dieren, etc, en Oorlogen tegen de Tartars. Verciert met over de 150 Afbeeltsels, na't leven in Sina getekent* (An embassy of the Dutch East India Company to the Grand Cham of Tartary, the present Emperor of China: in which are treated the most remarkable events which befell them during the journey through the Chinese Countryside [. . .] from the year 1655 to 1657 [. . .] Also, an accurate description of the Chinese cities, villages, government, sciences, crafts, customs, religions, buildings, costumes, ships, mountains, crops, animals etc.. and the wars against the Tartars.

⁴ There is a lot of research about the influence of Nieuwhof's book of China to the development of chinoiserie. For instance, see Paola Dematte and Marcia Reed, *China on Paper: European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2007), 13–26; Donald F. Lach, and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. 3, bk. 4, *East Asia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.1685; Chi-ming Yang, *Performing China: Virtue, Commerce, and Orientalism in Eighteenth-century England, 1660–1760* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 144.

⁵ Jacob van Meurs had obtained the privilege granted by the States of Holland for fifteen years to publish this book, not only in Dutch, but also in French and Latin editions. He also published many other travel accounts about China, including Athanasius Kircher's *China Illustrata* (1667), Olfert Dapper's *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye op de kust en in het Keizerrijk van Taising of Sina* in 1670. The same publisher of the three significant books on China in the seventeenth century, to a large extent, explains their close connection. Moreover, in 1682, his workshop also published Nieuwhof's books on East India and Brazil: *Zee- en Lant-Reise door verscheide Gewesten van Oostindien, behelzende veele zeldzaame en wonderlijke voorvallen en geschiedenissen. Beneffens een beschrijving van lantschappen, dieren, gewassen, draghten, zeden en godsdienst der inwoonders: En inzonderheit een wijtloopig verhael der Stad Batavia* and *Gedenkweerdige Brasiliaense Zee- en Lant-Reise und Zee- en Lant-Reize door verscheide Gewesten van Oostindien.en van Oostindien.*

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Embellished with more than 150 illustrations, drawn from life in China). As the title indicates, this book offers an overview of the Dutch embassy's visit in China and an accurate description of China. The greatest selling-point of this book conveyed by the title is the more than 150 finely engraved illustrations depicting a comprehensive range of aspects of China, including cityscapes and architecture; people and their costumes; customs; flora and fauna, and so forth.



Figure 1. Portrait of Johan Nieuhof from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

In this circumstance, it is not difficult to understand the great success of Nieuhof's book of China upon its publication, because it not only presented European readers with the most substantial and detailed account of China of the day, but its many illustrations also enabled them to visualize China. Translations into other European languages appeared in rapid

succession in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶ A French translation by Jean le Carpentier, under the title *L'Ambassade de la Compagnie Oriental des Provinces Unies vers L'empereur de la Chine*, was printed in Leiden the same year as the first Dutch edition.⁷ In 1666, van Meurs brought out a German translation, while another Dutch version with considerable deletions and additions was printed in Antwerp. A Latin translation under the title *Legatio Batavica ad magnum Tartarae Chamun* followed in 1668, and the first English translation was edited by John Ogilby in 1669.⁸

Thus Nieuhof's book of China quickly became one of the primary sources of information in Europe about China and the Far East, and its illustrations remained standard visual sources for images of China for a long time.⁹ As a result, it has been highly valued by scholars. For instance, in *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Edwin van Kley comments that "Nieuhof's account presented the Dutch reader with the most substantial and detailed description of the Middle Kingdom yet published" and the illustrations "provided European readers with more realistic visual images of China's landscape and people than ever before."¹⁰

⁶ It was quickly translated and printed into many editions. Dutch: Amsterdam, 1665, 1669, 1670, 1680, 1693, and Antwerp, 1666 (an expurgated Roman Catholic edition); German: Amsterdam, 1666, 1669 and 1675; English: London, 1669 and 1673; French: Leiden, 1665; Latin: Amsterdam, 1668. For the bibliography of these editions, see P. A. Tiele, *Nederlandsche Bibliographie Van Land- En Volkenkunde* (Amsterdam: Frederik Muller, 1884), 179–80.

⁷ According to John Pinkerton, this edition was made after Nieuhof's manuscript and de Carpentier had edited half of the first part and almost all of the second part of this book. See John Pinkerton, *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World, Many of Which Are Now First Translated into English: Digested on A New Plan* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1808–1814), 7.231.

⁸ In the English edition, Ogilby follows the text in the first Dutch edition with only a few slips. He also selected the best English illustrator, Wenceslar Hollar, to copy the engravings. See Margery Corbett, "The Dutch Mission to Peking in 1655," *Quaerendo* 16 (1986): 133.

⁹ See Demattè and Reed, *China on Paper*, 142.

¹⁰ Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. 3, bk. 1, *Trade, Missions, Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 484.

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This comment actually points out two characteristics that distinguish Nieuhof's book from previous publications on China, namely the written account and the illustrations. Accounts of China in previous publications were mainly based on scattered pieces of information including previously published sources, earlier reports by missionaries in China, and occasionally the accounts of other travellers, such as the *Historia del gran Reyno de la China* written by the Augustinian father Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza in 1585,¹¹ and Jan Huygen van Linschoten's *Reys-gheschrift vande navigatien der Portugaloyers in Orienten* (Travel accounts of Portuguese navigation in the Orient) and *Itinerario*, published in 1595 and 1596, respectively.¹² Although later works by Jesuits like Matteo Ricci¹³ and Martino Martini,¹⁴

¹¹ This book was in response to the growing interest in China among educated Europeans in the sixteenth century. However, Mendoza had never been to China. The original Spanish title is *Historia de la cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno de la China*, which means literally "history of the most notable things, rites, and customs, of the great kingdom of China." It was very successful that by the end of the sixteenth century that it had been reprinted 46 times in seven European languages: Spanish, German, Dutch Italian, French, English and Latin. See Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989), 24–25; also see Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. 1, bk. 2, *The Century of Discovery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 743. The Dutch translation was printed in Alkmaar in 1595 under the title *D'histoire ofte Beschrijvinghe van het Groote Rijk van China* (The History or Description of the Great Kingdom of China).

¹² When Jan Huyghen van Linschoten worked for the Portuguese, he had access to the secret nautical maps and then copied and took them back to Holland. These maps and a great number of sailing instructions about the voyage to Asia provided in his books enabled the Dutch and English to get access and trade with Asian countries including China. His books are also well known for the description on Asia. However, the account on China and its people takes a minor part, and it is in fact taken almost entirely from Mendoza's work, probably by the publisher Cornelis Claeszoon, who also brought out the Dutch translation of de Mendoza's description of China. See Ernst van den Boogaart, *Civil and Corrupt Asia: Image and Text in the Itinerario and the Icones of Jan Huygen Van Linschoten* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Lach and Van Kley, *Trade, Missions, Literature*, 435–436.

¹³ Ricci arrived at Macau in August 1582, and from 1601 he stayed in Peking until the end of his life in 1610. During this period, he kept writing journals to record the progress of his work and Chinese culture in general. His letters, reports and diaries were taken to Rome by Father Nicholas Trigault, a fellow Jesuit who translated them from Italian to Latin and had them published in 1615. There are a lot of works discussing his work and contribution on the communication between China and Europe. See Lach and Van Kley, *Trade, Missions, Literature*, 483; Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (London: Faber, 1985); Gianni Criveller, *Preaching Christ in Late Ming China: The Jesuits' Presentation of Christ from Matteo Ricci to Giulio Aleni* (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 1997).

offered the European readers more detailed information about Chinese society,¹⁵ it is noteworthy that such great attention and introductions to China may have been made out of more practical considerations, as most of the Jesuit's reports and letters were published to display the success of their mission in China in order to acquire support from Rome. Moreover, when the letters were translated or published, they often were abbreviated or censored by the secretary of the Society of Jesus. Unlike these publications, Nieuhof's book provides a contemporary's eyewitness account of the VOC's first official visit to China and the experience of travelling through the interior of China.

The first part of the book is a narrative of the journey and includes a brief description of Chinese history and geography borrowed from Father Nicholas Trigault's work and Martini's *Atlas*.¹⁶ But the essential part of the narrative of the envoy's visit is based upon Nieuhof's personal observations. The second part of the book is a general description of China based primarily on the works by Trigault, Semedo, and Martini.¹⁷ Therefore, although the general descriptions of China were borrowed from previous

¹⁴ After his study in China for more than ten years, Martini took with him more than 50 Chinese books and maps when he went back to Europe in 1651. In 1654, he arrived in Amsterdam and edited the large atlas of China for the cartographer Johan Blaeu, who published the *Novus Atlas Sinensis* in 1655. In addition to a general description of Chinese culture and history, this atlas contains seventeen maps of China and its provinces. Despite of the fact that Martini had been to several provinces of China as a Jesuit since 1642, the maps in his *Novus Atlas Sinensis* were entirely derived from the *Mongol Atlas*, which were compiled by Zhu Siben in 1311–12 and later revised by Lo Hongxian. Thus the Chinese provinces that Martini had never been to were also contained in his atlas. Even so, they were the most accurate maps of China that was available in Europe in the seventeenth century. On Martini and his atlas of China, see Demattè and Reed, *China on Paper*, 188–190.

¹⁵ It includes Chinese intellectual tradition, Chinese achievements in mathematics, astronomy and medicine as well as the crucial role of the Confusion classics in Chinese society.

¹⁶ See Lach and Van Kley, *Trade, Missions, Literature*, 483. Father Nicholas Trigault took back Matteo Ricci's work on China, and translated them from Italian to Latin and had them published in Augsburg in 1615.

¹⁷ Nicholas Trigault's *De christiana expeditione apud Sinas* (1615), Alvarez Semedo's *Imperio de la China* (1642) and Martino Martini's *Novus Atlas Sinensis* (1655) had been considered as the most important Jesuit's description of China in the first half of seventeenth century, see Lach and Van Kley, *Trade, Missions, Literature*, 483.

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publications, Nieuhof did provide firsthand material about China, especially his experiences along the route from Canton to Peking. This was no doubt very enlightening to European readers, especially given the context of China's nationwide seclusion policy in the seventeenth century, which made accurate information about the country hard to obtain.¹⁸

Another significant characteristic of Nieuhof's book are the more than 150 illustrations (the number of illustrations slightly differs in various editions of the book) which he claimed to have produced from eyewitness observation. Such an undertaking requires at least some basic artistic training, which most Jesuits, Dutch merchants, and sailors probably did not have. Although some earlier works are illustrated, the drawings and engravings do not seem to have been based on eyewitness observation. For instance, Van Linschoten's *Itinerario* contains several illustrations showing Chinese people, their costume, and boats. Figure 2, for instance, shows two Chinese couples arranged in the extreme foreground as if they are standing on a stage, while behind them a cityscape indicates where they come from. This is a commonly-used approach to highlight the figures and their costume in contemporary travel illustrations. The man second from the right wears a long robe with wide sleeves and a hat with two wings. At first glance, the robe and hat resemble the costume wore by Chinese officials in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), but a closer examination of the details suggests that the representation is not accurate, especially that of the hat. It is true that the official's hat in the Ming Dynasty has two wings, but they should be on the left and right side of the hat, as shown in figure 3, rather

¹⁸ On how the structure, language and other elements in Nieuhof's text affect the credibility of his narrative of his experience in China, see Dawn Odell, "The Soul of Transactions: Illustration and Johan Nieuhof's Travel in China," in *Tweelinge eener dragt': Woord en beeld in de Nederlanden (1500–1750)*, ed. K. J. S. Bostoen and Elmer Kolfin (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 225–241.

than on the front and back as shown in Van Linschoten's illustration. As a matter of fact, the style of the figures can hardly be regarded as Chinese, especially in view of the woman's hairstyle and collar decoration, and the background setting, which more closely resembles a European landscape. Given the fact that Van Linschoten never set foot in China, and the account of China in the *Itinerario* derives from Mendoza's work, the authenticity of these illustrations of China is quite doubtful.



Figure 2. Huygen van Linschoten, image of Chinese figures in *Itinerario*, 1595.



Figure 3. Unknown artist, “Portrait of Xu Guangqi (徐光启),” late Ming Dynasty.
Private collection in the United States.

Unlike previous publications, which contain limited and borrowed images, those in Nieuhof’s book are said to have been drawn *na het leven* (from life) in China and to provide a comprehensive survey of various aspects of life in China at that time. These illustrations include a frontispiece, a full-page engraved portrait of Nieuhof with an engraved poem by Jan Vos underneath (as shown in figure 1), one large folding map of China that shows the envoys’ route, thirty-four double-page engraved plates, and views of Batavia, Canton, Macao, Nankan, Nanking, and Beijing, among other cities, and one hundred and ten half-page engraved views and plates of religious and public ceremonies, costumes, animals, fish, and plants, with captions in Dutch.

These illustrations, such as those representing Chinese figures and their costumes, offer a more reliable impression of China than those in Van Linschoten’s book. A glance at an engraving showing the young viceroy of Canton (fig. 4) reveals the particular style and some characteristics of these illustrations. In the centre of this print, the young viceroy is mounted on

horseback and his soldiers are lined up in the background holding various flags. He wears a hat bedecked with peacock feathers and an official uniform, and a sword and a quiver of arrows hang on either side of his waist. His costume and equipment match the actual situation in the Qing Dynasty, as we can see “Portrait of Yunli (允礼)” made by Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766), an Italian Jesuit and well-known artist who was active in the Qing court in the eighteenth century (fig. 5). The remarkable similarities between these two pictures, such as the type of hat, the style of garment, and the kinds of weapons suggest that Nieuhof’s illustration offers the viewer a reliable impression of how Chinese officials in the Qing Dynasty were dressed and armed. And this, to a large extent, also reflects the remarkable quality of the illustrations noted in the title, that they are all *na’t leven in Sina getekent* (drawn from life in China).



Figure 4. Drawing folio 18 in the Paris manuscript.



Figure 5. Giuseppe Castiglione, “Portrait of Yunli (允礼),” 18th century, 31.5x36.7cm, Palace Museum, Beijing.

II. The claim of “na het leven” of the illustrations of China in

Het Gezantschap

The reliability of these illustrations of China had also been emphasized by Nieuwhof himself as follows: herein (without committing any breach of modesty) I dare boldly affirm that nothing considerable intruded into my observation relating to my design, and that making accurate maps and sketches, not only of the countries and towns, but also of beast, birds, fishes, and

plants, and other rarities never divulged (as I am informed) heretofore.¹⁹

In addition to the emphasis that he has made accurate sketches on the basis of his own observations, he further points out other authors' lack of accuracy: "And also we find by their most ancient and accurate writers, that they neither spared cost, study, nor pains, to be replenished with remote and transmarine embellishments, both of arts, science, and industry."²⁰

These claims were also highlighted by his brother Hendrik Nieuhof, who was in charge of the publication of his work in Amsterdam. Hendrik echoed his brother in his introduction to the book on Johan Nieuhof's *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, claiming that Johan stuck to the "naked truth" (naekte waerheit) and gave an account of history rather than fables.²¹

Claims of trustworthiness, as Dawn Odell has pointed out, usually appear in the introductions to the travel book narratives of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²² For instance, the German physician, scientist, and artist, Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716), who, like Nieuhof, was commissioned by the VOC to record an embassy's experience in Japan in 1690–92, pointed out in the prologue of his travelogue of Japan:

¹⁹ The Dutch text is "En hier in, zonder roem gesproken, heb ik my ook zodanig gequeeten, dat ik niets on-aangemerkt heb laten voor-bygaan, zo in 't onderzoeken, van de zeden en manieren dezer volken, en den aart van 't land, als ook, en dat voornamelijk, in 't aftekenen van lantschappen, steden, dorpen, dieren, kruiden, en meer andere vreemdigheden; 't welk tot noch toe, mijns wetens, niemand dus gedaan heeft." See Johan Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, ann den Grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen Keizer van China ...* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1665), 3.

²⁰ Nieuhof, *An embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, the second English ed. (London, 1673), 2.

²¹ Nieuhof, *Gedenkwaardige zee en lantreise door de voornaemste landschappen van West en Oostindien* (Amsterdam, 1682), Introduction, unnumbered.

²² Odell, "The Soul of Transactions: Illustration and Johan Nieuhof's Travel in China," 225.

I will describe and publish its [Japan's] present condition before dealing with my travel diaries and other works, giving assurance that everything is described and illustrated as I saw it and without exaggeration. The illustrations are perhaps not very attractive, but they are unaltered and by my own hand. The descriptions are at times incomplete, but they contain only facts that deal with the hidden workings of the empire.²³

Proclaiming the veracity of both the text and the illustrations was apparently a great selling point for his travelogue. This was actually a very common approach used to emphasize the credibility of travel accounts and illustrations in the seventeenth century, particularly for those authors who had actually seen the foreign countries for themselves.

Not all of Nieuhof's contemporaries approved his claim, especially readers who had the opportunity to observe China with their own eyes. Vincent Paets, the ambassador of the second VOC envoy's visit to China in 1666–67 wrote of Nieuhof's work that "in addition to the much exaggerated and unfaithful depiction in Nieuhof's book, I did not see anything special in China" (buyten de ontrouw door den schrijver Nieuhoff in het opproncken van zijn beschrijvinge niet bijsonders hebben aangemerckt).²⁴ More than a century later another Dutch ambassador, Isaac Titsingh, offered a similar assessment after his journey in China in 1795. He said that *Het gezantschap* was "a too much embellished record by Nieuhof" (een te zeer opgecierende

²³ Engelbert Kaempfer, *Kaempfer's Japan: Tokugawa Culture Observed*, trans. M. Bodart-Bailey (Hawaii: University of Hawaii, 1999), 27.

²⁴ Jan Vixseboxse, *Een Hollandsch Gezantschap Naar China in de Zeventiende Eeuw (1685–1687)* (Leiden: Brill, 1946), 85.

aftekening in Nieuhof).²⁵ These statements contradict the claims of both author and publisher, and raise doubts about the reliability of both the text and illustrations in Nieuhof's book of China.

This has drawn the attention of many scholars. In his study of Nieuhof's work, for instance, Leonard Blussé has pointed out that Nieuhof was not involved in the production and publication of the first Dutch edition or other translations,²⁶ so the embellishments in the printed book should be largely attributed to Hendrik Nieuhof and the publishers, and "because various text and illustration editors have made arbitrary recomposition and additions to its original content, his [Johan Nieuhof's] text and illustrations, to a large extent, lose their authenticity."²⁷

He has also analysed different editions of Nieuhof's book. In the first French edition, which was titled *L'Ambassade de la Compagnie Orientale des Provinces Unies vers l'Empereur de la Chine ... faite par les Srs P. de Goyer et J. de Keyser ... Le tout recueilli par Nieuhoff ... mis en François*, Jean le Carpentier admitted that he had modified and added some details.²⁸ The practical purpose for such modifications, however, is more obvious in the Dutch edition, which was published in 1666 in Antwerp. In this edition Nieuhof's negative account of how the Jesuits misrepresented the Dutch embassy to Chinese Emperor at the imperial court has been omitted. Instead,

²⁵ See Isaac Titsingh and Frank Lequin, *Isaac Titsingh in China (1794–1796): Het Onuitgegeven Journaal van Zijn Ambassade naar Peking* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Canaletto/Repro Holland, 2005), 280–82.

²⁶ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 16–17.

²⁷ Leonard Blussé and Zhuang Guotu, eds., *A Study of the First Dutch Embassy Visit to China* (<荷使初访中国记> 研究) (Xiamen: Xiamen University Publishing House, 1989), 23.

²⁸ Johan Nieuhof, *L'ambassade De La Compagnie Orientale Des Provinces Unies Vers L'empereur De La Chine ... Faite Par Les Srs P. De Goyer Et J. De Keyser ... Le Tout Recueilli Par Nieuhoff ... Mis En François*, ed. Jean Le Carpentier (Leiden, 1665), introduction. Also see Pinkerton, *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World, Many of Which Are Now First Translated into English*, 7.231.

the publisher, Cnobaert, who was closely connected with the Jesuits had added fourteen new chapters declaring the Jesuits' respectable activities in China.²⁹

This strategy was often used by seventeenth-century authors and publishers. Again, a glimpse of Kaempfer's comments on a previous travel book about Japan, this one edited by Arnoldus Montanus (ca. 1625–1683), will shed some light on this strategy:

Although it is claimed that the work [by Montanus] has been compiled from the diaries and writings of the ambassadors themselves, I truly believe that if you remove what the author has taken at random from the letters of the Jesuits . . . there would be very few pages left. More important still, most of the plates, which form the chief ornamentation and are as it were the soul of transactions of this kind, depart a long way from the truth, and do not show things as they were, but as the draughtsman imagined them to be.³⁰

In this statement, in the process of claiming the superiority of his own account, Kaempfer also reveals what he sees as the strategy behind seventeenth-century travel books. According to him, the text found in

²⁹ Paul Arblaster, "Piracy and Play: Two Catholic Appropriations of Nieuhof's *Gezantschap*," in *The Dutch Trading Companies As Knowledge Networks*, ed. Siegfried Huigen, Jan L. de Jong, and Elmer Kolfin (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 129; Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 16. According to Guido van Meersbergen, this edition was actually published by van Meurs under the false name Cnobaert; see Guido van Meersbergen, "De uitgeversstrategie van Jacob van Meurs belicht: De Amsterdamse en 'Antwerpse' edities van Johan Nieuhofs *Gezantschap* (1665–1666)," *Tijdschrift van de Werkgroep Zeventiende Eeuw Cultuur in de Nederlanden* 26:1 (2010): 79–82.

³⁰ I. H. van Eeghen, "Arnold Montanus's Book on Japan," *Quaerendo* 4 (1972): 256–57; also see Odell, "The Soul of Transactions: Illustration and Johan Nieuhof's Travel in China," 225.

seventeenth-century travel books on Asia relied largely on descriptions by Jesuits, while the illustrations were based on the draughtsman's imagination rather than the truth. Therefore, to return to Nieuhof's case, it would not be a surprise that the editors' and publishers' background as well as the contemporary readers' interest and preferences had an impact on the text and illustrations found in different editions of Nieuhof's work. In this process, the text and illustrations lose a lot of their authenticity, as Blussé has argued. That is to say, the changes made by the publishers and the engravers served as the primary rationale for why ambassadors who later had the opportunity to see China with their own eyes came up with a different assessment of publishers' claims of "na het leven" in Nieuhof's work of China.

But here one issue needs to be addressed: whether the different assessments, or the lack of authenticity, can be completely attributed to the publishers and editors? In other words, we have to ask whether the source of the printed books, namely, the text and the drawings or sketches made by Nieuhof while still in China, had the quality of "na het leven."

Here, a very interesting case study related to the above issue is the version of Nieuhof's travelogue of China included in one of the four-volume travel compilations, the *Relations de Divers Voyages Curieux* by the French publisher Melchisédech Thévenot (c. 1620–1692).³¹ Thévenot mainly collected and translated travel accounts from English and Dutch long-distance voyagers, as these accounts contained more reliable and

³¹ For more information on Thévenot's collection of voyages, see Nicholas Dew, "Reading Travels in the Culture of Curiosity: Thévenot's Collection of Voyages," *Journey of Early Modern History* 10 (2006): 39–59.

practical information that could be used by French merchants.³² Because Thévenot had good relations with people in the Dutch Republic, he could get access to some unpublished texts relating to the Dutch East Indies trade, particularly through Christiaan Huygens, who sent him François Caron's description of Japan. It is highly likely that Thévenot's Dutch friends gave him a copy of Nieuhof's as yet unpublished account of the Dutch embassy to China.³³

However, there remains the controversial issue of whether a version of Nieuhof's travelogue of China was first compiled in Thévenot's collections, as Peter Rietbergen and, in his wake, Blussé suggest. The *Relations de Divers Voyages Curieux* is the first large-scale French travel collection and consists of four parts. The first part of the *Relations* appeared in 1663, the second in 1664, the third in 1666 (together with a reissue of Parts 1 and 2), and the fourth in 1672.³⁴ Nieuhof's account of China appeared in the third part in 1666, but it was also marked that this was first printed in 1664 as claimed on the octroy page that "Achevé d' imprimer pour la première fois le 25, October, 1664."³⁵ Reconstructing the messy collections by Thévenot and interpreting this privilege, Rietbergen has concluded that the Thévenot edition of 1664 is actually the publication of an original text and was wrongly dated 1666.³⁶ That is to say this account of Nieuhof should be dated one year earlier than the first Dutch edition, even if it was reissued in

³² See Melchisédech Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux, qui n'ont point esté publiées ou qui ont esté traduites d'Hacluyt, de Purchas, et d'autres voyageurs Anglois, Hollandais, Portugais, Allemands, Espagnols, et quelques Persans, Arabes et autres orientaux* (Paris, 1666), Introduction; and Dew, "Reading Travels in the Culture of Curiosity: Thévenot's Collection of Voyages," 48, 51.

³³ See Dew, "Reading Travels in the Culture of Curiosity: Thévenot's Collection of Voyages," 53.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 52, footnote 46.

³⁵ See Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, "Extrait dv privilege dv roy."

³⁶ P. J. A. N. Rietbergen, "Zover de aarde rijkt. De werken van Johan Nieuhof (1618–1672) als illustratie van het probleem der cultuur-en mentaliteits geschiedenis tussen specialisatie en integratie," *De zeventiende eeuw* 2–1 (1986): 24.

the third part of Thevenot's work in 1666. This means his edition is not a translation from the first Dutch edition. Therefore, the version of Nieuhof's travelogue in Thévenot's collection is supposed to be closer to Nieuhof's original work than the first Dutch edition, and it has been so considered by later authors such as Antoine François Prévost (1697–1763)³⁷ and John Pinkerton (1758–1826), who chose to use this edition for his English translation in 1808.³⁸ Anthony Reid further points out in his 1988 translation of Nieuhof's book that the French edition by Thévenot is the most faithful version of Nieuhof's *China voyage*.³⁹

However, Guido van Meersbergen believes that Thévenot's version of Nieuhof's account is an abridgement from Van Meurs's edition,⁴⁰ because he does not believe the existence of the original text as about which Thévenot wrote as follows:

The principal merit of this *Relation* is the truth. I have checked that the instruction is trustworthy and the only ornament that I can offer is truth. I have held the conviction that people who read it can be sure that it completely conforms to the two Dutch copies that I have had copied and one of them is signed Nieuhof. For this reason, I have been very careful to change nothing, and even certainly not add more passages by other authors who

³⁷ A. F. Prévost, *Histoire Générale Des Voyages* (La Haye, 1746–61), 7.3.

³⁸ As he said in the introduction of his collection of Nieuhof's account of China: "Of these several editions of this work, we think that of Thévenot to be both the most exact and genuine. For which reason we have used it as a check upon the English translation, and have often supplied it from thence; which additions, for distinction's sake, are placed between hooks." See Pinkerton, *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World, Many of Which Are Now First Translated into English*, 7.233.

³⁹ Johan Nieuhof, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), vii.

⁴⁰ Meersbergen, "De uitgeversstrategie van Jacob van Meurs belicht: De Amsterdamse en 'Antwerpse' edities van Johan Nieuhofs Gezantschap (1665–1666)," 78–79.

wrote about China in fear of mixing things they have reported by hearsay. I think only one area that he [Nieuhof] wanted to speak about the history of Temurleng, is wrong.

(Le principal merite de cette Relation est la verité. I'ay crû que sur tout la traduction en devoit estre fidele, que c'étoit là le seul ornement qu'elle pût souffrir. Ceux qui la liront se peuvent assurer qu'elle est en tout conforme à deux copies Hollandoises que j'en ay manuscrites, dont l'une est signée Nieuhoff. Je me suis bien gardé par cette raison d'y rien changer, & encore plus d'y inserer des passages de ces autres auteurs qui ont écrit de la Chine, de peur de mesler ce qu'ils rapportent souvent sur des oüydire, avec ce que ces gens-cy ont veu. Il n'y a qu'un seul endroit où il a voulu parler de l'histoire de Temurleng, où je croy qu'il se trompe.)⁴¹

In this account, he not only declares that this travelogue is based on two Dutch manuscripts of which he has made copies and that one of them has been signed by Nieuhof, but he also emphasizes that the French translation conforms to these two copies and that he does not add anything else about China by other authors. Based on this statement, Blussé therefore infers that these two copies are actually the source of Nieuhof's account in Thévenot's version. Besides the manuscript, which according to Thévenot is by "Nieuhof," there is another official manuscript submitted to the Gentlemen Seventeen, the directors of the VOC, which will be analysed in detail in later chapters of this study. Regardless, Thévenot's version provides a much briefer report of the first Dutch embassy visit to China than

⁴¹ Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, Introduction.

the other editions. Compared to the 208 pages in Van Meurs's 1665 Dutch edition, there are only 37 pages about this journey in the Thévenot version.

Thévenot also remarks on the credibility of Nieuhof's account, and expresses his belief that except for the history of Temurleng, Nieuhof's record on China is reliable. But he is not altogether uncritical and he points out the limitations or shortcomings of Nieuhof's record, noting that because the Dutch embassy had always been confined in their lodgings in Canton and in Beijing, Nieuhof had little chance to broaden his version and provide a more comprehensive and detailed description of China.⁴² It is true that due to Chinese policy, the Dutch embassy was often confined in their lodgings during their stay in Canton and Beijing, and they were often shut out of some Chinese towns and cities. Therefore, unlike most editors who always insisted on the credibility of their publications, Thévenot tried to offer an objective assessment of Nieuhof's work. He also applied this objective attitude to the illustrations in Nieuhof's manuscript, which we can see from his comments on the illustrations:

I have nothing added in my description, because I thought they had no relation to the description he gives and I had some suspicion that there were many cityscapes made for pleasure, in addition to which all the cities in China look alike, as we are assured by the cosmographers themselves who confirm that who

⁴² Ibid., unnumbered. The French text is "Cette Relation est courte à la vérité, mais il faut faire justice à son Auteur, & faire reflexion sur ce que les Hollandois ayant esté toujours enfermez en leur logis à Canton & à la Cour de Pekin, comme il dit, après cette confession il auroit eu mauvaise grace de s'étendre à faire une description des Provinces de la Chine, d'en marquer l'étendue & les bornes, de faire le denombrement & l'estime du nombre d'hommes qui les habitent, de marquer leurs revenus, & enfin d'entrer dans un détail que nous ne devons attendre que de ceux qui l'ont traduit des Chinois mesmes, que je donneray avec quantité d'autres particularitez, dans la suite de ce Recueil. Outre la Relation du Voyage des Ambassadeurs, Nieuhoff nous en a donné aussi une autre manuscrite qui a pour titre, Route de Voyage des Ambassadeurs."

has seen one, has seen them all. For this reason, I believed that it was enough to insert the views of Peking and Nanking, the two principal cities of China. The plate that shows the animal carrying musk, is already in the first part of this book; those of plants and some animals of this country can be seen in the second part with the description given by Father Boym. (Je n'ay point inseré dans la Relation les figures des villes, car je trouvoy qu'elles n'avoient point de rapport à la description qu'il en donne; & j'eus quelque soupçon que c'estoit plustost des veües de paysages faites à plaisir, outre que toutes les villes de la Chine estant semblables, comme nous l'asseurent leurs Cosmographes mesmes, qui en a veu une, les a veuës toutes: j'ay crû par cette raison qu'il suffisoit de mettre les veuës de Pekin & de Nankin, les deux principales villes de la Chine. La figure de l'animal qui porte le Musc, est déjà dans la première partie de ce Recueil: celles des plantes & de quelques animaux de ce pays se peuvent voir dans la seconde Partie avec la description qu'en a donnée le Père Boym.)⁴³

In Thévenot's opinion, the representations of Chinese cityscapes do not match the specific description in the text and they are made for pleasure. He also asked for professional judgments from cosmographers and concluded that the cityscapes of China are so alike that the representation of one or two can stand for all. This may be the reason why his edition contains only twelve illustrations (except for the envoy's route in China), most of which are individual representations of Chinese people, animals, and buildings, but

⁴³ Ibid., Introduction.

none of the landscape. Moreover, different subjects have been arranged into one illustration; for instance, the landscape of Peking has been inserted in the cityscape of Nanking, as he has planned.⁴⁴

Thévenot's opinion and judgement should be based on his personal consultation of Nieuhof's text and drawings or sketches of China. Unlike the other editions, his version was based on copies of actual manuscripts, and should not have been influenced by the illustrations in the first Dutch edition; rather, the illustrations in his edition were based on Nieuhof's original drawings or sketches. Thus, Thévenot's account not only indicates the existence of a manuscript signed by Nieuhof, but also introduces the fact that there were many drawings or sketches of China made by him. However, rather than sticking to the original designs by Nieuhof, he recomposed and made changes to them, as he admitted in the aforementioned account, because he thought Nieuhof's representations of Chinese cityscapes were made for pleasure and did not meet the cosmographer's requirements. However, Hendrik Nieuhof, who was responsible for the publication of his account on China, had a quite different opinion about the sketches made by his brother.⁴⁵ In the dedication to the first Dutch edition, he said:

My brother, who has crossed the Ocean up to five times, and over a period of more than twenty-five years has visited different places in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, on water or land, where many memorable things and worthy-to-tell stories

⁴⁴ Ibid. This has also been discussed by Blussé; see Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 17.

⁴⁵ Hendrik Nieuhof was an unknown Dutch artist of the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, no drawings, paintings or other written materials by him are available. In addition to his management in publishing his brother Johan's travel accounts, the only information that can be found about him is the registration of his marriage in Amsterdam.

occurred to him has not only written down with diligence the achievements of the embassy and all curious things that have happened to him along the way, but has also noted the cities, pagodas, idol temples, villages, animals, plants, custom, ships, etc., in over 150 sketches (which no one has done till my brother had brought them from China, and the prints of which are shown in the work) drawn by him over there from life, and with a map of the journey in China, with the adjoining description succinctly and accurately explained, in addition to what the trustworthy authors have put on paper.

(Mijn broeder, die, zonder roem gesproken, den grooten Oceaen tot vyfmaal heft overgescheept, en in den tijt van meer als vyf en twintig jaren verscheide plaatsen in Europe, Asia, Africa en Amerika, te water en te lande bezocht heft, alwaar hem vele verhaal-en gedenkwaardige zaken zijn voorgevallen, heft niet alleen, behalven het beschryven van het verrichten des Gezantschaps, alle vreemdigheden en verhaalwaardige dingen, die hem op de reis zijn voorgekomen, met een byzonderen vlijt aangemerkt en hier beschreven, maar ook de steden, pagoden of Afgoden Kerken, Dorpen, Dieren, Gewassen, Drachten der inwoonders, Schepen, &c. in meer dan 150 schtsen, (die van niemant tot noch toe, dan van mynen broeder uit Sina, gebracht zyn, en waar af d'Afbeeldsels in dit werk vertoont worden) zelf aldaar na het leven, als mee een kaart van de gantsche reis door Sina, afgeteekent, en met haere bygaande beschryvingh op het bondighste en naukeurighste verklaart, neffens het geen de

geloofwaardigste Schryvers daar af op het pampier gebracht hebben.)⁴⁶

Here, Hendrik points out that Johan Nieuhof had made more than 150 sketches “na het leven” showing various aspects of China and the prints in the first Dutch edition were made on the basis of these sketches. It is not clear whether the sketches used by Hendrik are the same as those that Thévenot saw, but apparently, both of them had seen Nieuhof’s sketches and they had quite different opinion about them. This leads to the questions: whose opinion on Nieuhof’s sketches is closer to the fact and whether these sketches are made from life? To answer these questions, it is necessary to find and investigate the sketches made by Nieuhof on site. The comparison between these original drawings or sketches by Nieuhof and the illustrations in the printed books will shed some light on the above issues.

Therefore, to deeply investigate the illustrations in the printed book, it is necessary to start with their source, namely, the original drawings or sketches made by Nieuhof.

III. The search for the manuscript made by Nieuhof and its significance to the study of Nieuhof’s images of China

The value of the manuscript signed and sketches made by Nieuhof mentioned by Thévenot has been recognized for centuries and the effort to trace them has lasted just as long. According to Blussé, a vague clue as to the whereabouts Nieuhof’s manuscript was first given in the 1802 *Mémoire sur la collection des Grands et Petits Voyages, et sur la collection des*

⁴⁶ Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap*, 4.

voyages de Melchisédech Thévenot by the French scholar A. G. Camus (1740–1804). He said, “Collections of Thévenot’s manuscripts have been preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France since 1712, but we are not sure whether Nieuhof’s manuscript is among them.”⁴⁷

In 1861, the Dutch scholar J. T. Bodel Nijenhuis highly commended Nieuhof’s books about his journeys in Brazil and Asia and wrote of *Het Gezantschap*, “this book, as people well know, is the earliest and most reliable source of China in the seventeenth century and is still very valuable even today (Het is, gelijk men weet, de meest vroegtijdige en trouwste bron over het China der zeventiende eeuw, nog op waarde geschat in de tegenwoordige tijd).”⁴⁸ But he also questioned the over-decorated illustrations and tried to deduce their source: “Both earlier and alter Dutch travellers... supplied illustrations of their travel accounts, which were engraved on copper-plates by Dutch engravers, and hence these illustrations could be preserved. But their original drawings seem to have been lost. Nieuhof must have made hundreds and hundreds of drawings for his work. Where are they? All my efforts to trace these sketches have been in vain (De vroegere en latere Nederlandsche reizigers [...] hebben in hunne reisverhalen afbeeldingen geleverd, die door Nederlandsche graveurs in het koper gesneden en aldus bewaard gebleven zijn. Doch hunne oorspronkelijke teekeningen schijnen te zijn verloren gegaan. Ook Nieuhof heeft er voor zijne werken honderden bij honderden geteekend. Waar zijn ze? Al mijn pogingen tot opsporing dier schetsen bleven vruchteloos).”⁴⁹ Later, P. A. Tiele (1834–1889) claimed that he had found the manuscript of

⁴⁷ A. G. Camus, *Mémoire sur la Collection des Grands et Petits Voyages, et sur la Collection des Voyages de Melchisédech Thévenot* (Paris, 1802).

⁴⁸ See Nijenhuis, “Johan Nieuhof,” 36.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 43–44.

Nieuhof's travelogue with the sketches at the premises of the book dealer Martinus Nijhoff in The Hague, but he did not give any more information.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, successive attempts to locate Nieuhof's original text and sketches remained fruitless until Blussé found a manuscript in the 1980s in Middelburg.

The Middelburg manuscript is titled *Dagelijkse aanteekening van zommige notable voorvallen in de voyagie van de E. Heeren Pieter de Goyer en Jacob Keyzer etc.* (Daily records of some notable events in the voyage of the Honorable Messrs. Pieter de Goyer and Jacob Keyzer). It contains a brief description of the VOC envoy's visit from Batavia to Beijing and back and is accompanied by eighty-one drawings (not including the title page). After further study, it was found that the manuscript was actually a draftsman's 1850 copy of an older document.⁵¹ But it raised questions about where the Middelburg manuscript was copied and whether the source could be the manuscript made by Johan Nieuhof?

Not much later, in 1984 Blussé discovered a manuscript personally signed by Johan Nieuhof, in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.⁵² He believed that this was Nieuhof's original report about the visit of the VOC envoys to the imperial court in Peking between 1655 and 1657. It was submitted to the directors of the VOC in 1658, which was seven years before the publication of the first Dutch edition. He further discovered that this manuscript was bought by Prince Roland Bonaparte from the Amsterdam book dealer Frederik Muller in the 1890s and bequeathed to

⁵⁰ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 18.

⁵¹ According to the staff of the Zeeuws Museum in Middelburg, this draftsman is named E. J. W. Koch.

⁵² The codex is BnF/Cartes et Plans/ Société de Géographie/ Ms.in 8o/ 17/1271 Reserve. Also see Alfred Fierro, *Inventaire des Manuscrits de la Société de Géographie* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1984), 96–7, nt. 1271.

Société de Géographie after his death.⁵³ It turned out to be the same copy Tiele had seen.

According to the inscription, which has the signature of “Nieuhoff,” this manuscript is indeed a report recording the VOC embassy’s journey in China to the directors of the Amsterdam chamber. And according to the date signed on the manuscript, it was submitted to the VOC on 3 August 1658, when Nieuhof returned to Holland and stayed in Amsterdam.⁵⁴

In addition to an inscription, the manuscript consists principally of descriptive text embellished by eighty-one drawings (not including the title page). The text records the entire duration of envoys’ journey, including the departure from Batavia in August 1655, the six-month wait in Canton, the journey from Canton to Peking, and the return to Batavia in March 1657. Depicted in pencil, chalk, pen, and watercolour, these drawings represent various aspects of China, such as dress, cityscapes and landscapes, boats, plants, and so forth. Comparing the drawings in the Paris manuscript and the engravings in the first Dutch edition, we find that most of them have basically a similar design. For instance, in the drawing folio 89 (fig. 6), which is supposed to represent the cityscape of Nanjing (南京), the foreground is filled with a vast field and a canal extends diagonally toward the city wall in the background. Flourishing trees grow on the canal bank and a group of people holding an umbrella walk over a bridge. Here, the city of Nanjing is mainly represented as a silhouette. One can see a long city wall running across the picture in the distance, while Chinese-style buildings such as a pagoda rise from behind the wall. A range of continuous mountains runs in the distance and one in the left background is very

⁵³ See Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhoofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 20.

⁵⁴ The date shown in the inscription of the manuscript is “Derden van Oostmd” (3 August).

notable for its gigantic size. All these details can also be found in the illustration of the first Dutch edition, as shown in figure 7. This engraving has exactly the same overall composition as the drawing. But on closer observation, we can see that the engraving includes many exotic objects such as the palm tree in the foreground, and some decorative details such as the staffage (human and animal figures added for aesthetic or decorative reasons) and various trees in the middle ground. These seem to have been added later by the engraver or publisher.

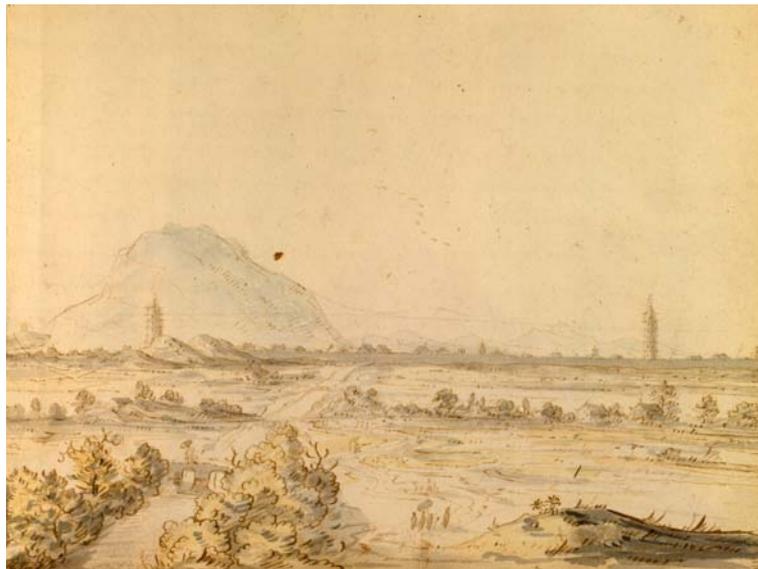


Figure 6. Drawing folio 89 in the Paris manuscript.



Figure 7. Engraving from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

Consequently, the great resemblance between the drawing in the Paris manuscript and the engraving of the first Dutch edition suggests that it is worth investigating the claim of “na het leven” through the drawings in the Paris manuscript. Moreover, as the Paris manuscript is closely related to Nieuhof rather than the later publishers, these drawings are of great importance for examining the nature of the engravings. A thorough study of the drawings in the Paris manuscript, which may be the very foundation of the published book, may offer some clues about the validity of the claim of “na het leven” in the first Dutch edition of Nieuhof’s travel journal of China published in 1665, and in so doing shed further light on the study of the image of China in Europe in the seventeenth century.

IV. Previous research

Research has been done on whether the drawings in the Paris manuscript are made from life and how to interpret the claim of “na het leven.” When this manuscript was exhibited in Middelburg in 1987, Blussé and R. Falkenburg each wrote an essay for the catalogue *Johan Nieuhofs*

Beelden van en Chinareis 1655–1657, and their investigations had a profound impact on the later study of Nieuhof's work of China. Blussé's essay concentrates on introducing of the historical background of the VOC envoys' first visit to China, the publication of Nieuhof's book and its different editions, and particularly the discovery of the Paris manuscript, which he argues is the source of Nieuhof's book. In his opinion, Nieuhof himself compiled the manuscript on the basis of the sketches he made on spot, and the lack of trustworthiness of various published editions should be attributed to arbitrary changes made by the editors and publishers.⁵⁵ This has laid an essential foundation for the later study.

Writing from the perspective of an art historian, Falkenburg focuses more on the examination on the trustworthiness of the drawings in the Paris manuscript and pointed out the importance of the European audience's understanding of the phase "na het leven" in the seventeenth century. He agrees with the historian F. de Haan's opinion that the engravings in Nieuhof's book of China were made on the basis of the sketches that Nieuhof made in China, but that they were later supplemented with cityscapes in the background and figures in the foreground by other people in the Netherlands. To support this hypothesis, he has analysed a number of drawings to determine how they were produced. On the basis of his findings, he argues that the drawings in the Paris manuscript are not the original sketches that Nieuhof made on site but were made on the basis of some rough sketches. He believes the drawings in the Paris manuscript were made by different hands. He concludes that although these engravings supposedly represented "the more realistic China," they actually reproduced exotic and

⁵⁵ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 19–20.

fantastic images of China.⁵⁶ Falkenburg's research pays much attention to the drawings and engravings themselves and investigates them from different angles and pays special attention to how they were produced. It brings new perspectives to the study of the drawings, especially in respect to the "na het leven" quality, but to a certain degree neglects the historical records.

For a long time, little was done to build on the study of Nieuhof's work. For instance, Edwin van Kley has commented that "Nieuhof's account presented the Dutch reader with the most substantial and detailed description of the Middle Kingdom yet published" and "they [the illustrations] nevertheless provided European reader with more realistic visual images of China's landscape and people than ever before."⁵⁷ In an essay titled as "A Perfume Is Best from Afar: Publishing China for Europe," Marcia Reed says that "Nieuhof was conscious of his role as a writer and artist whose practical observations were corrections to the wondrous tales and exaggerations of previous authors [...] for the most part his book is an eyewitness account, with no missionary agenda, written in a direct style that describes the people and places depicted in illustrations based on his own sketches." Furthermore, she writes, "Nieuhof's volume broke the ground by providing a range of arguably more accurate and undoubtedly more varied and compelling images of China and its people for Western consumption."⁵⁸ Her comments remain very general and to a certain degree show an uncritical appraisal of the illustrations in Nieuhof's book of China.

Further research into Nieuhof's images of China was not taken up until the last decade. In 2001, Dawn Odell's article "The Soul of Transactions:

⁵⁶ Ibid., 87.

⁵⁷ Lach and Van Kley, *Trade, Missions, Literature*, 484.

⁵⁸ Demattè and Reed, *China on Paper*, 13.

Illustration and Johan Nieuhof's Travels in China," deeply investigated how trustworthiness is conveyed in European travel literature by focusing on Nieuhof's description of China. She carefully studies Nieuhof's text and points out that Nieuhof promotes his own authority by denying the stories of previous travellers, through employing clear and direct language, and through the juxtaposition of image and text. In respect to Nieuhof's landscape drawings of China, however, Odell compares them with ships' journals, especially the format of rutters, navigational guides which provide coastal profile views and written instructions for coastal navigation. She believes that Nieuhof's sketches are very similar to such coastal profile views as made by sailors.⁵⁹ Certainly, like rutters they show profiles and the "viewer is always placed at distance from the land and is often separated from it by an open expanse of still and empty water."⁶⁰ Yet all this seems a bit overdone to me, because what makes Nieuhof's drawings fundamentally different from coastal profiles in rutters is that he tries, admittedly often somewhat ineptly, to provide dimensional depth to his drawings, which coastal profiles never do. Nevertheless, neither of these scholars addresses the "na het leven" quality of the drawings in the Paris manuscript and the engravings in the printed book.

In 2003, Friederike Ulrichs investigated Nieuhof's views on China in her book *Johan Nieuhofs Blick auf China (1655–1657): Die Kupferstiche in seinem Chinabuch und ihre Wirkung auf den Verleger Jacob van Meurs* (Johan Nieuhof's view of China (1655–1657): The copper engravings in his China book and their effect on the publisher Jacob van Meurs). In this book, she analyses and compares these two China books published by Jacob van

⁵⁹ Odell, "The Soul of Transactions: Illustration and Johan Nieuhof's Travel in China," 238.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 234.

Meurs, Nieuhof's and *Gedenkwaardig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye, op de kust en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina*, a compilation of two later embassies by Olfert Dapper (1639–1689).⁶¹ In her study, she also shows the transformation of Nieuhof's observations and sketches of China into the copper plates. In this process, she discusses some factors such as the fact that the engravers had never been to China, contemporary pictorial traditions, and the book's market potential. She discusses Nieuhof's impact on Olfert Dapper's work and points out that Dapper's illustrations focus on more sensational themes than Nieuhof's work and "use more accessory embellishment to please the baroque taste of the time."⁶² Moreover, regarding the drawings in the Paris manuscript and the engravings in the printed book, she agrees with Blussé that the Paris manuscript was produced by Nieuhof and that its drawings are much more trustworthy than the engravings in the printed book. She adds that the fanciful representations of China in the engravings should be attributed to the engravers (probably Jacob van Meurs, who was also an engraver, and his staff) and Johan's brother Hendrik Nieuhof, who was also a painter. Comparing the drawings in the Paris manuscript to those by other contemporary Dutch artists, Ulrichs also concludes that "the imaginative additions in the plates of Nieuhof's account are partly attributable to the amateurish and hasty nature of his sketches."⁶³ However, she neither discusses whether these "sketches" are the drawings in the Paris manuscript

⁶¹ This book was published in 1670 in Amsterdam and was translated into English as *Atlas Chinensis* by J. Ogilby in 1671. It mainly records the Dutch admiral Balthasar Bort's experience along the coast of Fujian province in 1663 and 1664 and Pieter van Hoorn's embassy to Peking from 1666 to 1668. However, Dapper himself had never been to China, so both the content and plates of this book were borrowed from other sources. See Demattè and Reed, *China on Paper*, 280.

⁶² Friederike Ulrichs, *Johan Nieuhofs Blick auf China (1655–1657)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 117, 156.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 43–44, 153.

nor analyses the nature of these “sketches.” She concludes, on the whole, that the illustrations can be considered as reliable representations of Nieuhof’s observations, even though they were more or less embellished. As a matter of fact, her opinion on the trustworthiness of the illustrations is quite nuanced: “Nieuhof’s observations in China were changed when engravers transferred them to the printed medium, adapting them to Dutch art traditions, because readers expected entertainment and sensation in addition to pictorial information about a distant and unknown country. However, fundamental new information about China was preserved. The need to show exotic things is only apparent in the staffage and individual motifs like deities and animals.”⁶⁴

It is true that some of the suspicious additions in the engravings could be attributed to the publishers, but can we therefore infer that the drawings in the Paris manuscript are genuine? Another recent contribution about Nieuhof’s work on China is Guido van Meersbergen’s essay “De uitgeversstrategie van Jacob van Meurs belicht: De Amsterdamse en ‘Antwerpse’ edities van Johan Nieuhofs Gezantschap (1665–1666).”⁶⁵ Focussed on Nieuhof’s work of China, his efforts are mainly dedicated to the analysis of the genesis of various editions, the relationship between the editions and the source, the interrelationship between the publications, and the publication strategies of Dutch publishers in the seventeenth century. According to him, the publishers’ choices at first sight are seemingly determined by religious sensibilities, but on closer inspection there are more trade-based matters. The primary aim of Van Meurs’s first version of *Het Gezantschap* was to satisfy the commercial interests of his audience, that is,

⁶⁴ Ibid., 155.

⁶⁵ Meersbergen, “De uitgeversstrategie van Jacob van Meurs belicht: De Amsterdamse en ‘Antwerpse’ edities van Johan Nieuhofs Gezantschap (1665–1666),” 73–90.

the merchants in Holland. But he tailored later editions to appeal to a wider audience.

Van Meersbergen points out that the huge international success of the publication of Nieuhof's book on China was due to the fact that it was based on direct observations and the text is interwoven with accompanying pictures. About the source of Thévenot's version, he has a different view than Rietbergen and Blussé. According to them, the sources of Thévenot's publication were the two manuscript copies that he mentions in his introduction. On the basis of this, many scholars believe that Thévenot's version should be closer to the original work than Nieuhof's published book. Thévenot's reputation as a scholar and librarian also reinforces this impression. But according to Van Meersbergen there was no other original text for the Thévenot and Van Meurs's editions than the Paris manuscript discovered by Blussé. He speculates that Nieuhof made a collection of texts and drawings during his journey in China, that this collection was the basis of the Paris manuscript, and that Hendrik Nieuhof probably had a copy of the Paris manuscript that he used for the first edition of the book printed by Van Meurs. Therefore, according to him, the version by Thévenot was based on Van Meurs's edition.⁶⁶ Moreover, he believes that there are no original sources for Thévenot's version and deems it merely a highly abbreviated version of the book published in 1665.⁶⁷

In my opinion, however, this judgment is not based on a solid foundation. There is no doubt that Nieuhof would have made notes and sketches during his journey in China, and that when he returned to the Netherlands he made the Paris manuscript on the basis of his work. But the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 77, 78–79.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

first Dutch edition should be seen as being based on the notes and sketches he left to his brother Hendrik Nieuhof rather than a copy of the Paris manuscript in Hendrik's possession. Anyhow, as the Paris manuscript was finished in a very short time it is unlikely that Hendrik had enough time to make a copy before the manuscript was submitted to the directors of the Amsterdam Chamber. Moreover, the fact that much more detailed and reliable descriptions of China and the embassy's activities appear in Van Meurs's edition suggests that the source of this book—the collection of notes and drawings made by Nieuhof during his journey in China—must have contained much more information than the Paris manuscript. That is to say, besides the Paris manuscript, there must also be an original source for Van Meurs's edition. This means Van Meurs's edition is indeed closely related to the Paris manuscript but it is not necessarily based only on the Paris manuscript, since it includes text and illustrations not found in the Paris manuscript. Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that Nieuhof made a lot of notes and drawings, especially considering the commission he received from the VOC. He may have made selections from these original works when he produced the Paris manuscript.

In addition to the Paris manuscript, there is another report about this embassy to China submitted to the VOC, which I will analyse in chapter 2. This actually supports Thévenot's statement that he had two copies and that one of them was signed by Nieuhof. In that sense, Blussé's opinion is not "incorrect," as Guido van Meersbergen has said. And Thévenot's version is different from Van Meurs's edition, especially with respect to the illustrations. I will discuss these arguments in detail in the later chapters.

Guido van Meersbergen also argues that the images made by Nieuhof follow the tradition of maritime reporting because they resemble the

drawings of coastal profiles, and that the detailed maritime and geographic information and related sketches were to be used as directions for the journey. So, he maintains, the identity and credibility of the material presented in the Amsterdam edition is guaranteed.⁶⁸ This argument is actually based on Odell's opinion, but without a comprehensive investigation of the Paris manuscript, especially the cityscapes of China. Of course those cityscapes are meant to show what the cities looked like from a distance, but the way in which the sketches are drawn is fundamentally different from the coastal profiles found in rutters. My investigation of the representations of Chinese cityscapes in the Paris manuscript and in Van Meurs's edition, however, suggests that it is a rather complicated situation. The Chinese cityscapes in these works are actually artificially composed on the basis of direct observation, and topographical accuracy is a primary concern of neither Nieuhof nor the engravers.

Moreover, according to Van Meersbergen, Thévenot's version lacks the reliable "log data" contained in Van Meurs's edition, but includes the contemplative, which leads him to believe that Thévenot's version must have been published after the appearance of the publication by Van Meurs. He suggests that Thévenot's version was published in 1666 instead of 1664. I prefer to keep a reserved opinion on these statements.

Van Meersbergen's analysis of the Antwerp edition is however very impressive and original, if not sensational. The Antwerp edition was published under the name Michael Cnobbaert, but he believes this is merely a pseudonym for Van Meurs. Because Van Meurs sought to maximize the market and opportunity, he published a seemingly Catholic edition under a pseudonym. He further analyses the copper plates in different editions,

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

particularly in respect to the changes of the titles and captions. By comparing the Amsterdam and Antwerp editions, he points out that the publisher strategically targeted different audiences and markets.

Guido van Meersbergen's main contribution is that he has thrown new light on the relationship between different editions and the strategy taken by Van Meurs to conquer a large market. But without a comprehensive study of the sources of these editions, and of the Paris manuscript, some of his opinions are not built on solid foundation.

Above all, the importance of the drawings in the Paris manuscript has been recognized through the recent research into Nieuhof's images of China. However, some issues regarding the nature of the drawings in the Paris manuscript are still under question: How and what kinds of images of China were represented by Nieuhof? How should we interpret the "na het leven" claim of the drawings and the illustrations in the context of Dutch pictorial conventions of the seventeenth century? In attempting to answer these questions, I will contextualize my analysis of the nature of the drawings in the Paris manuscript within discussions of the Chinese and Dutch pictorial source material, how the "na het leven" quality was achieved, and the claims of "na het leven" in the context of seventeenth-century Dutch pictorial conventions.

V. The structure

Therefore, my research on Nieuhof's images of China in Europe in the seventeenth century starts from the drawings in the Paris manuscript. The first chapter is dedicated to a background introduction about the first Dutch embassy visit to China and the Paris manuscript. The first section establishes the historical background and purpose of the VOC's visit to China. The second section introduces Nieuhof's biography and the

commission he received from the VOC will be introduced in the second section. In the third section, I briefly describe the Dutch envoys' court voyage and adventures in China. In the fourth section, through an analysis of the appearance of the Paris manuscript, I discuss my conclusion that the manuscript is actually a reproduction made by Nieuhof after his return to Holland rather than the original sketchbook he used during his journey in China. On the basis of these findings, in the last section, I try to discuss the authorship of the Paris manuscript through Nieuhof's own accounts in various sources and a comparison of the handwriting in the Paris manuscript and the maps of Saint Helena produced by Nieuhof in 1658. All these suggest that the Paris manuscript was produced by Nieuhof during his stay in Amsterdam in 1658. On the basis of Nieuhof's accounts about his experience in this period, I reconstruct the circumstances under which the Paris manuscript was produced.

Chapter two concentrates on the analysis of the text in the Paris manuscript. An analysis of Nieuhof's accounts about the journey to China in the first section suggests that he not only recorded the embassy's mission, but that he was also emotionally engaged in his experience there. The second section offers a comparison of Nieuhof's work with an official report to the VOC signed by one of the envoys, Jacob Keijser. It will be shown that this official report is much more specific and written from quite a different perspective than Nieuhof's account. This may be why the later published book on China did not contain the contents of the official report.

Comparisons of the dates and corresponding subject matter found in the official report and the Paris manuscript also suggest that Nieuhof's account in the Paris manuscript is based on his own eyewitness observation.

Comparison with Chinese chorographical works suggest that the

descriptions of China in the Paris manuscript are not completely accurate; in fact, there are mistakes due to the author's misunderstanding of local Chinese customs, the lack of knowledge of China, and so forth. This may lead people to doubt the credibility of the drawings in the Paris manuscript.

Therefore, chapter 3 conducts an investigation into the drawings themselves. It starts with a brief analysis of the themes and working procedure of the drawings in the first section. The coarse representation in these drawings invites people to question Nieuhof's artistic skills. In the second section, I compare them with the drawings of China made by the trained draughtsman Pieter van Doornik, who travelled with the following embassy and encountered experiences similar to Nieuhof's. In contrast to the clear and neat representation of China in Van Doornik's drawings, the uncertain and coarse strokes in the Paris manuscript suggest that Nieuhof was not a well-trained draughtsman or artist. To further investigate the artistic skill embodied in the drawings in the Paris manuscript, I also compare Nieuhof's drawings with reproductions preserved in the Zeeuws Museum, which indicates that the original sketches, which are produced on the basis of the drawings in the Paris manuscript, were not of good quality. This leads to two important issues related to the nature of the drawings: under what artistic principles or conventions were the drawings in the Paris manuscript produced, and how did they reflect the "na het leven" quality.

Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to an investigation of the above issues. In chapter 4, I first address the term "na het leven"—the essential claim of the drawings in the Paris manuscript and the engravings in the first Dutch edition—in the context of seventeenth-century Dutch pictorial convention. Two characteristics of the "na het leven" quality, namely that the depiction is based on direct observation and that the artist should select the motif and

refine the picture, play a key role in understanding how these drawings were produced. Accordingly, the study of the drawings focuses on the representations based on direct observation and those that aim to achieve a harmonious effect through refinement. This actually is closely related to the working procedure of the drawings, namely, the depictions in pencil and chalk and the depictions in pen. Therefore, in the second section of chapter 4, I first investigate the working procedure of the drawings in the Paris manuscript with several examples. Furthermore, comparisons of some drawings with actual Chinese scenes or pictorial material suggest that the representations of some specific motifs, such as Chinese officials, grotesque rockeries and hills, boats, architecture, and so forth, are based on direct observation. And it is also noteworthy that most representations of these motifs were first drawn in pencil and chalk. In section 3, I discuss the great resemblance of these representations to Chinese pictorial material, and suggest that Nieuhof might have adopted some contemporary Chinese pictorial material when he produced the drawings. The drawing of the Bao'en temple will be used to prove this argument.

After the analysis of the representations of China based on direct observation, in the first section of chapter 5, I first highlight that a number of drawings, particularly those themed with Chinese cityscapes, do not match actual Chinese scenes, especially after taking into account the topographical features. Closer observation of these drawings shows that they are very roughly sketched in pencil and chalk and that the representation of Chinese scenes is mainly refined in pen. Chapter 5 further demonstrates Nieuhof's efforts to refine the rough preliminary depictions through the depiction in pen, so as to meet the audience's expectation by making representations of China natural or even exotic. In section 2, I first

take the example of Jan van Goyen's "View of Leiden" to illustrate the common seventeenth-century Dutch artistic practice of refining cityscapes for a natural effect. Afterwards, I analyse how Nieuhof followed Dutch pictorial convention to compose Chinese cityscapes, especially with regard to the patterns of their composition. It is noteworthy that a great number of components have Chinese traditional characteristics. Through the case study of a representation of the Forbidden City, section 3 shows how Nieuhof "improved" the representations of Chinese scenes based in part on his observation and in part on his imagination. All these examples show that in the process of refining Chinese scenes, apart from relying on direct observation, Nieuhof tended to create some scenes with a natural and exotic appearance to attract the contemporary audience who had never seen China.

After establishing the basic analysis of the drawings in the Paris manuscript, chapter 6 is dedicated to analysing what kinds of improvements have been made to the illustrations of the first Dutch edition and how they reflected the "na het leven" quality. The case study of how Pieter van Doornik's drawings were modified by the publisher Olfert Dapper throws some light on this issue. In the first section, I discuss how the illustrations were produced on the basis of the drawings. Van Meurs and Thévenot's different approaches to dealing with the drawings are addressed here. Section 2 is dedicated to an analysis of how engravers embellished the engravings, for instance, by directly borrowing elements from contemporary Dutch pictorial material, rearranging elements in the drawings, and even by inventing new representations of China. Section 3 focuses on the improvements made by the engravers when they produced illustrations whose design is similar to that of the drawings. Such improvements include making Chinese architecture look natural, drawing details closer for a

clearer observation of Chinese scenes, and so forth. In this process, many embellishments have been added in order to make representations of China exotic. Given the above, these improvements made by the engravers have nothing to do with direct observation and provide no further reliable and specific information of China. To meet Western reader's expectation of a foreign country, the illustrations concentrate more on the embellishments to enhance a sense of naturalness while bringing some exotic sensibilities to the contemporary reader.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to the analysis of chinoiserie works, because the illustrations in Nieuhof's book played an important role in the development of chinoiserie in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. By giving various examples inspired by Nieuhof's illustrations, I try to suggest that the chinoiserie designers initially simply copied Nieuhof's work; but later on also started to create the images of China through a combination of various elements with their own imaginations. The approaches to producing these works of chinoiserie have a lot in common with the manner in which the illustrations in the printed book were published. And this suggests that the illustrations in Nieuhof's China book not only provided sources for chinoiserie, they themselves were also early representations of chinoiserie in the seventeenth century.

In conclusion, the question whether the drawings in the Paris manuscript and the engravings in the printed book are made "na het leven" cannot be simply answered by yes or no. The claim needs to be considered in the context of Dutch pictorial conventions of the seventeenth century. On the one hand, the study of Nieuhof's images of China will make a contribution to the study of what kinds of images of China were presented to European audiences in the seventeenth century and how Dutch artists of the

seventeenth century made “na het leven” images. On the other hand, the study of the “na het leven” quality of the drawings and illustrations reveals a more complicated relationship between Nieuhof’s images of China and chinoiserie, namely, that they not only are the fundamental sources for later chinoiserie designs, but that they themselves are also part of chinoiserie style.

Chapter 1 The First Dutch Embassy Visit to China and the Paris Manuscript

1.1 The historical background of the first Dutch embassy visit to China

Around the end of sixteenth century, Chinese silk, porcelain, lacquer, and other Chinese goods became known to Dutch merchants who ran their business in Lisbon. By reselling these articles in the Netherlands, they made huge profits and desired to develop the market. This ambition was further stimulated when two Portuguese carracks, the *San Jago* and the *Santa Catarina* were captured in 1602 and 1603, respectively. The cargoes of Chinese porcelain, raw silk, gold, lacquer, furniture, and other Chinese goods were auctioned off in Holland and yielded almost six million guilders in profits.⁶⁹ Unsurprisingly, such tremendous profits encouraged Dutch merchants to consider the possibility of direct business with China.

Soon, the opportunity to trade directly with China presented itself. At the end of sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, the arrival of wealthy refugees from the Southern Netherlands and the increasing wealth in the north created great funds for large-scale adventures. A number of Dutchmen who had visited Asia in Portuguese service also provided much valuable information on Asia.⁷⁰ Furthermore, because

⁶⁹ On 25 February 1603, a Portuguese ship, the *Santa Catarina*, was also captured and her cargo was sold in Holland. More information on the profit gained from these cargoes and the import of Chinese porcelain in the seventeenth century, see C. J. A. Jörg and Patricia Wardle, *Porcelain and the Dutch China trade* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982), 17.

⁷⁰ The information about China in Holland might start with early travel experiences, for instance, the observations by Dirck Gerritsz Pomp included in the *Tresoor der Zeevaart* (The treasury of navigation), which was published by Lucas Jansz. Waghenaer in 1592. Similarly, Jan Huygen van Linschoten's *Reys-gheschrift vande navigatien der Portugaloyzers in Orienten* (1595) and *Itinerario*

Amsterdam had already developed into a centre for the publication of travel accounts, maps, and atlases, it was not difficult to acquire appropriate maps and other geographical materials showing the route to Asia.⁷¹ All these factors demonstrated to the Dutch people that the time had come to initiate direct trade between the Netherlands and Asia, and in 1595 the first Dutch ships successfully set sail for Asia. The round-trip voyage to Southeast Asia took two years but it showed the possibility of opening up trade with Asia.⁷² As a result, a number of ports prepared to fund such trade, and various “distant trade companies” were rapidly set up.

In 1601, a Dutch ship registered under one of these “old companies” arrived on the Chinese coast but was not able to open up trade with China. In 1602, various companies in the Netherlands merged into a new single organization—the *Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie* (VOC, the United East India Company), which subsequently developed into the most successful and powerful commercial enterprise of the day.⁷³

In addition to looking after the commercial needs of the Netherlands’ trade with Asia, the VOC’s directors in Batavia realized the importance of promoting intra-Asian trade and especially of establishing a trade relationship with China. The profits obtained from the intra-Asian trade could be used to pay for the products shipped to the Netherlands, which would greatly reduce remittances of bullion to Asia and so facilitate this

(1596) also served as guides for the Dutch on their voyages to Asia and China at that time. See F. S. Gastra, *The Dutch East India Company: Expansion and Decline* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003), 15.

⁷¹ Kees Zandvliet, *Mapping for Money: Maps, Plans and Topographic Paintings and Their Role in Dutch Overseas Expansion during the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Amsterdam: Batavian Lion International, 1998), 50–55.

⁷² Gastra, *The Dutch East India Company: Expansion and Decline*, 16.

⁷³ On the founding of the VOC, *ibid.*, 17–36.

long-distance trade.⁷⁴ Due to its vast territory and its geographical proximity to and political connections with other countries in Asia, China was of great strategic significance. Nevertheless, attempts to trade directly with Chinese ports encountered difficulties. Above all things, the Chinese authorities continued to pursue an isolationist policy and forbade any trade with foreign countries, apart from what private Chinese merchants were allowed to trade. In addition, there were few good opportunities for the Dutch as Portugal had largely monopolized the Chinese market from its foothold in Macao. This made it very difficult to establish communications between Chinese officials and the newcomers.⁷⁵

In the first few decades of the seventeenth century, the VOC tried to access the Chinese market and break the Portuguese monopoly position by force. According to Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587–1629), governor-general of the VOC, the Company’s ships should “pester and harrass the whole coast of China as much as possible, so that the Chinese will be forced to make a negotiated settlement [with us], which will undoubtedly happen.”⁷⁶ After they were repelled at Macao, the Dutch continued their cruise along the southeast coast of Fujian (福建) province and successfully occupied Penghu (澎湖). By diplomatic negotiations with Chinese authorities there, the Dutch

⁷⁴ For more information about the intra-Asian trade, see Jan Nov De Vries and A. M. van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 386–93.

⁷⁵ Leonard Blussé, *Tribuut aan China 1601–1989 (中荷交往史 1601–1989)* (Amsterdam: Cramwinckel, 1989), 31–47.

⁷⁶ Jan Pieterszoon Coen, “Bescheiden Omtrent Zijn Bedrijf in Indie,” ed. H. T. Colenbrander (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1919). This is cited from a letter of June 20, 1623: “maar daerenboven lanx de gantsche cust van China soon seer quellen ende incommoderen als doenlijck is, om de Chinesen daerdoor te constringeren, selfs raedt ende middel tot gevoechelijcke accomodatie te soecken, gelijk ontwijffelijckken geschieden sall.” Actually, in 1622 he assigned Commander Cornelis Reijersen to lead a fleet to China with a commission to negotiate the opening of free trade and to seek an opportunity to attack and occupy Macao. On June 22, Dutch troops landed on Macao but were defeated by the Portuguese after a fierce battle.

were eventually allowed to establish a port in Taiwan (台湾, also known to Europeans as Formosa) in return for their promise to stay away from the mainland.⁷⁷

The Dutch colonisation of Taiwan was not only a milestone in the development of the VOC's intra-Asian trade strategy, as Taiwan soon became a way station in the trade between China and Japan, but it also brought massive profits from the production of sugar, the trade in deerhides, and taxes paid by Chinese settlers in Taiwan.⁷⁸ Still, direct access to the Chinese market did not become easier because of this. In the 1650s when China was going through the disruptive transition from the Ming Dynasty to the Manchu Qing Dynasty, the Dutch found their situation imperilled by Zheng Chenggong (郑成功, known to Europeans as Koxinga or Coxinga), a Chinese military leader who was loyal to the Ming Dynasty and successfully raised a rebellion in southern China. During his rebellion against the new emperor, Zheng Chenggong built up a naval force and planned to conquer Taiwan as a refuge for people fleeing from the Qing Dynasty.⁷⁹ His naval force attacked Dutch ships in order to control the coastal areas and take over Dutch shipping routes and trading profits. Consequently, Taiwan's strategic position as a Dutch base of operations was seriously impeded and the profits from Taiwan significantly declined, which also began to endanger the Dutch

⁷⁷ For the battles and negotiations from 1622 to 1624, see John E. Wills, *Pepper, Guns, and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1622–1681* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 20–24.

⁷⁸ By doing so, the VOC could reduce the quantity of silver that was sent from Holland to Asia. For more information on the importance of the trade with China in the intra-Asian trade, see E. M. Jacobs, *Merchant in Asia: the Trade of the Dutch East India Company during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: CNWS Publications, 2006), 285.

⁷⁹ Blussé, “No Boats to China: The Dutch East India Company and the Changing Pattern of the China Sea Trade, 1635–1690,” 67.

trade with Japan.⁸⁰ The need to establish new connections with the mainland became more urgent.

Under these circumstances, the VOC's directors in Batavia decided to employ diplomatic means to secure permission from the Manchu government for direct trade. The dynastic transition seemed to provide an excellent opportunity to open up China and start up its contact with the outside world. Therefore, when Martini conveyed a message to Batavia in 1653 that the Chinese emperor intended to grant all foreigners the right and freedom of trade in the city of Canton, the Dutch immediately realized that they needed to seize the opportunity.⁸¹ This time, their strategy was to obtain trading privileges in China through diplomacy with the new Manchu government, to which end they sent an embassy to negotiate these matters with Chinese authorities in Peking.⁸²

The governor-general and council in Batavia set out very comprehensive instructions for the ambassadors, Pieter de Goyer and Jacob Keijser,⁸³ two experienced merchants of the Company who led this mission.

⁸⁰ Blussé, *Tribuut aan China 1601–1989*, 67. Zheng Zhilong started direct trade in silk between mainland China and Japan in 1641, which forced the VOC to open up other supply routes. Also see Kops, "Not Such an 'Unpromising Beginning': The First Dutch Trade Embassy to China, 1655–1657," 540. By the mid-seventeenth century, the competition between Zheng Chenggong and the VOC for the Japanese market was fierce and the VOC portion was always significantly smaller than Zheng's.

⁸¹ See Lach and Van Kley, *Trade, Missions, Literature*, 483; Olfert Dapper, *Gedenkwaardig Bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye op de Kuste en in het Keizerrijk van Taising of Sina* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1670), 3; Pieter van Dam and F. W. Stapel, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie* ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1927), vol. 1, bk. 2, p. 606, n. 3, and Edwin J. Van Kley, "News from China: Seventeenth-Century European Notices of the Manchu Conquest," *Journal of Modern History* 45: 4 (Dec., 1973): 569.

⁸² The VOC's attempts to negotiate direct trade with China are also described in the VOC's instruction to the ambassadors, which is preserved in the National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague; see VOC 879, "Bataviaes Uitgaand Briefboek," 1655, Instruction fol. 366–371. It is thanks to Natalie Everts' great help with the transcription and translation of these Dutch archives of the seventeenth century that I could complete my research.

⁸³ De Bruyn Kops has given a detailed background introduction of these two leaders of this embassy visit to China. De Goyer was assigned as chief merchant and commander of the VOC fleet to the Philippines and chief merchant in Sumatra and Siam in 1648. Although he was accused of trading for

In addition to being ordered to negotiate with Chinese authority for direct trade, they were also instructed as follows:

and because you people will make a journey through this land, which until now, as far as we know, has never been carried out by any Dutch man, you will come across many strange things that never have been seen or heard of or known to exist.

Therefore, you people shall take perfect notes of all these things, the one after the other, and describe everything which befalls you precisely. You have been assigned a steward to accompany you, an artful drawer, who will capture all the towns, villages, palaces, rivers, fortified and other strange buildings you will pass by, depicting their correct shape and appearance. We shall also supply you with the description and a map made by the Jesuit Father Martinus Martini who, as he himself has stated, wandered through all parts of the kingdom of China. During your journey, on many other occasions, it can be most useful to you. Therefore, we thought it necessary to hand these over to you, among other documents, for corroboration. (Ende aangesien Ul. op deese landtreuse, die noch noyt onses weetens door eenich Neederlander is gedaen, veele vreemdicheden die noyt gesien of gehoort en sijn, sullen ontmoeten, soo sullen Ul. van ‘teen en ‘tander perfecte aanteeckeninge doen, ende alles correct beschrijven ‘tgeene Ul. in den wech weedervaren mocht, sijnde

personal gain in 1649 and was ordered to return to Holland, he was appointed to lead the embassy to China in 1655 because of his past performance. Jacob de Keijser was promoted to full merchant status in 1650 and in 1651 was made chief merchant in Tonkin. See Kops, “Not Such an ‘Unpromising Beginning’: The First Dutch Trade Embassy to China, 1655–1657,” 544–45.

den hofmeester die Ul. meede gegeven wert, een constich teyckenaer, door welcken alle steeden, dorpen, paleysen, rivieren, vasticheeden ende andre merckweerdige gebouwen, die Ul. voorbij passeeren mocht, in haare rechte forme ende gestaltenisse connen afgebeeldet werden. Sullende oock de beschrijvinge ende een gemaecte caerte van den Jesuijten pater Martinus Martini, die meest alle de deelen des Coninckrijckx van China soo hij seyt selver doorwandelt heeft, in uwe reyse, ende veele andere geleegentheeden meer, seer dienstig weesen connen. Hebbende daeromme noodich geacht UL. Deselve onder andere papieren tot hunne speculentie mede ter handt te doen stellen.)⁸⁴

The Gentlemen Seventeen not only desired to obtain trading privileges in China, but they also sought to gather knowledge about China including visual information, for which purpose they specifically commissioned a steward with drawing skills to depict scenes of China in “their correct shape and appearance.” It so happened that Johan Nieuhof was enlisted in this position.

1.2 Johan Nieuhof and his commission

Johan Nieuhof was born on 22 July 1618 in the small German border town of Uelsen in the county of Bentheim. His father, a native of the Dutch town of Kampen, was burgomaster of Uelsen, which suggests that Nieuhof may have received a good education when he grew up. Furthermore, as Uelsen is on the border with the Netherlands, this may have given Nieuhof the opportunity to search for fortune and adventure in Amsterdam. It was

⁸⁴ See VOC 879, “Bataviaes Uitgaand Briefboek,” 1655, Instruction fol. 366–398.

here that Nieuhof's adventurous life began. In 1640, when he was twenty-two years old, he followed his uncle Alexander Picard on a voyage from Amsterdam to Brazil in the service of the Dutch West India Company (W.I.C.).⁸⁵

The W.I.C. had tried to establish a plantation colony after conquering a large part of Portuguese Brazil. However, in 1645 most of the conquest territory was lost again and the W.I.C. managed to retain only one fort in Brazil until 1654. During his stay in Brazil, which ended in 1649, Nieuhof must have witnessed these events and he likely acquired plenty of knowledge and experience that would stand him in good stead in his later career. At that time, Dutch Brazil was home not only to merchant settlers and soldiers of the W.I.C. who were there for strictly commercial or military purposes, but many artists, scientists, and writers, were also present to record exotic scenes and to scientifically document this new territory in detail. These were either commissioned by the W.I.C. or worked under the patronage of Prince Johan Maurits (1604–1679), who had been appointed as governor-general of the Dutch colony of Brazil. For instance, in 1636 Frans Post was among the artists and scientists who sailed to Brazil with a commission from Johan Maurits to record various aspects of Brazilian life and of its landscape, fauna, and flora.⁸⁶ He produced many drawings of Brazil and after his return to the Netherlands elaborated them into paintings

⁸⁵ The Witsens were patrons of many talented people who served the Dutch abroad. See Nieuhof, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, v–x. In the introduction, Reid provides information about Nieuhof and the background about the publication of this book. On Nieuhof's background, also see Nijenhuis, "Johan Nieuhof," 36–44.

⁸⁶ On the artistic activities in Brazil in the seventeenth century, see Rebecca Parker Brienen, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 12–24.

that showed the Dutch vivid images of this distant land.⁸⁷ Nieuhof would have noticed and learned from these artists and their works during his stay in Brazil.

In July 1649, Nieuhof decided to return to his hometown via Amsterdam, and as Anthony Reid speculates, could have carried with him a fine collection of notes and sketches he made during his stay in Brazil.⁸⁸ It is believed that the commission to make drawings of Chinese scenes for the VOC was based on a recommendation from Cornelis Witsen to his fellow members of the Gentlemen Seventeen after he had seen Nieuhof's drawings of Brazil. In any event, in 1653 he set off to Asia in the service of the VOC. The voyage to Batavia took eight months including one month rest and refitting at the Cape of Good Hope of which Nieuhof made a detailed description.⁸⁹ In his book on China, Nieuhof discusses his decision to go to East India and join the embassy to China.

After my return from the west-Indies, where I had sometime remained, my occasions invited me from home (a contrary course) to the East-Indies; where, not long after my arrival at Batavia, it was order'd by the General Maatzuyker, and the Honorable Council then residing there, to send Peter de Goyer, and Jacob Keysar as Ambassadors, with Credentials, and a considerable Train of Attendants, to Peking in China, to the Grand Cham of Tartary, the now Emperor of China, empowering

⁸⁷ Joaquim Sousa Leão Filho, *Frans Post, 1612–1680* (Amsterdam: A. L. van Gendt, 1973), 24–42; also see Brienens, *Visions of Savage Paradise*, 32–33.

⁸⁸ Nieuhof, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, vi.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

to Negotiate concerning a free and mutual Commerce with them in his Kingdoms and Territories.⁹⁰

He also mentions this assignment in his posthumously published book, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies, 1653–1670*:

Whilst I tarried at Batavia, an embassy was sent from the general director Johan Maetzuicker and the other directors of the East-India company, to the *Cham of Tartary*, who some few years before had conquered the most potent empire of China, to treat about a free commerce betwixt the two nations, which had several times before been attempted and sought for by the Dutch, but was as often refused by the Chinese. Jacob de Keisar and Peter de Goyer being appointed ambassadors, two yachts, viz. the *Koudekerke* and *Bloemendael*, man'd with 90 men, and provided with several fine presents for the emperor were got ready for their transport, and I was ordered to go aboard the *Bloemendael* in the quality of steward.⁹¹

This book also offers another version of how he came to join the embassy as a steward:

The ambassadors embark'd the 14th of July 1655, and set sail the same day from the road of Batavia. The 4th of September they arrived in the city of Kanton, and the 4th of May 1656, in the city

⁹⁰ Nieuhof, *An embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 3.

⁹¹ Nieuhof, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, 157.

of Nanking, and the 16th of July at Peking. After some stay there, they returned the 21st of November to Nanking, to Kanton the 28th of February 1657, and came into the road of Batavia the 21st of March, where they gave an account of their negotiation to the Dutch council of the Indies: Of all which I have given you an ample account in my Chinese voyage, published first in Low Dutch, and since translated into several other languages, and printed at Amsterdam for Jacob Meurs, with many cuts [engravings] and draughts of places, living creatures, fruits and other remarkable things.⁹²

Nieuhof's experiences and the accounts of his commission in this period not only provide a foundation for the further study on the authorship of the Paris manuscript; they also provide important background for an examination of the drawings in the Paris manuscript and the illustrations in the printed book. Although the first Dutch diplomatic visit to China did not accomplish its purpose, the travel account by Nieuhof achieved great success in Europe. After Nieuhof returned from China to Holland, he was frequently visited by people who were curious about China and urged him to publish his account.

The book was published in 1665 by the Amsterdam printer Jacob van Meurs with the support of Cornelis Witsen.⁹³ It was regarded as the most comprehensive representation of China of the time. However, Nieuhof did not have the chance to enjoy this publication triumph because after only a

⁹² Ibid., 157. However, it is unclear whether this description was written by him or his brother Hendrik Nieuhof, who was later also responsible for the publication of his book of East India.

⁹³ According to the preface by Hendrik Nieuhof, the book was dedicated to Hendrik Dirksz and Cornelis Witsen, see Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap*, 3.

three-month stay in Amsterdam, he had left the Netherlands in October 1658 and after a voyage of about seven months arrived back in Batavia on 18 July 1659.⁹⁴

Not long after, he was ordered on board of the ship *Henrietta Louisa* and set sail from Batavia to Ambon (which he called Amboyna) on 23 December 1659.⁹⁵ He made an impressive description of the islands Buru (Bouro) and Ambon, including their villages, surroundings, local plants, and so on.⁹⁶ On 3 May 1660, he set sail to Batavia and arrived there on the twenty-ninth. No sooner had he arrived than he received orders to go to Japan.⁹⁷ He set sail with Jan van der Laan, the commander of fifteen ships with orders to sail to Taiwan and attack the city of Macao and to take heed of Zheng Chenggong's activities.⁹⁸ But the Dutch fleet was devastated by a violent storm and it had to be repaired at the Dutch base in southwestern Taiwan. Nieuhof wrote regretfully of "the season for our intended voyage to Japan being past, as forced against my will to unload my ship here, and the design against Makao [Macao] being laid aside for that time, because Koxinga was abroad with a powerful force." So he was dispatched to negotiate with Zheng Chenggong, only to bring back Zheng's reply that he was too busy planning his campaigns in China.⁹⁹ Nonetheless a few months later Zheng Chenggong invaded Taiwan and forced the Dutch to surrender after a siege of nine months on 1 February 1662.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Nieuhof, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, 159.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 160–68.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 173–74. According to Reid, the war between Zheng Chenggong and the VOC was also recorded in his *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, probably by his brother Hendrik rather than by Nieuhof himself.

Nieuhof left Taiwan on 11 December 1660 and sailed for the Persian port of Gamron to load a cargo of sugar.¹⁰¹ He reached his destination on 6 April 1661 via Colombo and set sail for south India on 2 June 1661, and there he spent the next five years.¹⁰²

Between June and August 1661, he visited some Coromandel ports and cities including San Thomé, Punto Pedro, Negapatan, and Paliakatte. By that route he arrived again in Colombo on 7 October, where he was not only a supervisor but also treasurer of the train of artillery for the campaign against the city of Kolang [Quilon] in December. He was also involved in the conquest of Cranganor in January 1662. He was ordered to take charge of settling everything and repairing the castle in Kolang, where was stationed for the next two years.¹⁰³ He left Kolang in March 1664 and was put in charge of the Dutch post of Tuticorin until May 1665 when he returned to Quilon to resolve some problems.¹⁰⁴ However, he ran into trouble with Commissary Rijcklof van Goens, and was summoned to Colombo where he remained under arrest for eleven months.¹⁰⁵

After his release in August 1667, he was sent to Batavia where he stayed there for three more years, “without being engaged in the company’s service, and in 1670 returned thence into Holland.” During this period, he still kept making drawings, and he wrote that “During those three years, I had sufficient opportunity to take a full view of the city, both within and without, in which I was so curious, as not only to make draughts of all its

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, ix.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 257. This experience is also discussed in Bodel Nijenhuis, “Johan Nieuhof,” 48–50.

public structures, but also of such plants and trees as grow in and about that city.”¹⁰⁶

In 1669 he sent a letter to the VOC defending himself against accusations of malpractices committed at Kolang.¹⁰⁷ This letter was first discovered by Blussé during his study of Nieuhof.¹⁰⁸ In this letter he claimed that he was not able to pay the Company 8,227 *Rijksdaalder* as a free man. Finally it seems that the patrons of his book on China, the Witsen family, helped him to return Holland from Batavia in 1670. He arrived at Amsterdam in 1671 and successfully proved his innocence to the Gentlemen Seventeen. It is likely that at the time he also brought back his works and material about the East Indies, which were again left with his brother.

In fact, this was to be his last sojourn in Holland. As Reid has commented, “even though he was now fifty-three years old and might have been expected to enjoy his literary fame in Europe, Johan Nieuhof once again prove restless to explore yet more quarters of the world.”¹⁰⁹

He set off again in December 1671 and his ship, the *Pijl*, arrived in Table Bay within sight of the Cape of Good Hope on 8 April 1672. On 6 June, the ships *Boog* and *Pijl* continued their passage towards the island of Madagascar which they first sighted on the twentieth.¹¹⁰ There Nieuhof traded with local chiefs, and once he “brought back 22 slaves, 13 cows, some sheep and other provisions.”¹¹¹ On 29 September 1672, he was near the Cape of Konquifo and went ashore to visit the local king in hopes to exchange some of his commodities, but he never returned. Even though the

¹⁰⁶ Nieuhof, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, 263.

¹⁰⁷ This letter is preserved in the National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague; see VOC 1266, fol. 1006–23.

¹⁰⁸ See Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ See Nieuhof, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, x.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 324.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 325.

directors of the Chamber of Amsterdam finally dispatched a vessel to search for him in May 1676 at his brother Hendrik's request, the local ruler claimed that he knew nothing.¹¹² It was believed that he and those accompanying him were killed after setting foot on land.¹¹³ In 1682, ten years after his presumed death, Nieuhof's publications on Brazil, *Gedenkwaardige Brasiliaense Zee en Lant-reize*, and the East Indies, *Zee en lant-reize, door verscheide gewesten van Oostindien*, were produced by the same publisher that had released his book on China and which was now in the hands of the widow of Van Meurs. These books had less influence and appeared in fewer editions and translations than his book on China.

In all, Nieuhof's biography shows that this adventurer actually devoted much of his life to travel and the business of trade, and that he enjoyed making drawings of whatever he encountered. Except for the drawings of China, Brazil, and the East Indies and two maps, it seems that Nieuhof did not leave any other works of art. In any case, he was interested in recording exotic lands, the costume and customs of the people, and the like, but he did not seek a career as a professional draftsman. Therefore, even if he may have received some artistic training, Nieuhof's sketches made in China and elsewhere should be judged as the work of a traveller and reporter of the world rather than as the products of a professional artist or draftsman.

1.3 The Dutch envoys' court voyage and their adventures in China

Besides the two ambassadors, Pieter de Goyer and Jacob Keijser, the full VOC delegation included six waiters, four other merchants, two interpreters, a surgeon, a drummer, a trumpeter, and a steward, namely, Johan Nieuhof.

¹¹² Ibid., 326.

¹¹³ For a more detailed description of Nieuhof's life, *ibid.*, 324–326.

The envoys set sail from Batavia on 14 June 1655, heading for Canton. A month later they came in sight of Macao, a Portuguese town encircled by walls and connected to the mainland via a narrow strip of sand and rocks. On 18 June, they dropped anchor in the roadstead of Hutoumen (虎头门), “a delightful place and very convenient for trade.” They waited there for around two weeks until several mandarins accompanied them to Canton. There they met the viceroys of Canton and got an interview which ended with a conclusion that nothing could be decided on the spot; orders from Peking had to be awaited.¹¹⁴ A few months later they received permission to travel to Peking. Moreover, the Chinese emperor supplied them with a veritable fleet to carry not only the delegation and all its baggage but also a large escort of Manchu soldiers commanded by three mandarins. Messengers were sent ahead to inform the magistrates of the towns along their route to prepare to welcome the guests. The preparation took such a long time that impatience started to grow with the Dutch delegation. Finally, the junks set off on 17 March 1656. The distance from Canton to Peking is around two thousand miles along rivers and numerous canals. As the voyage relied on the wind and, more often, the efforts of the oarsmen and pullers, the junks proceeded slowly and with many difficulties: in narrow rivers the current might grow swift and turbulent so that the junks darted between rocks and overhanging cliffs, and some oarsmen fell into the water and drowned.¹¹⁵ Fortunately, the poor voyage conditions encountered by the

¹¹⁴ For a more detailed description on the route and experience, see Kops, “Not Such an ‘Unpromising Beginning’: The First Dutch Trade Embassy to China, 1655–1657,” 553–58.

¹¹⁵ Nieuhof had described the miserable conditions that the embassy encountered on their voyage. For instance, “Kregen ’s nachts een geweldig onweer, ene van onze jonken, daar ’s keyzers schen kadie in was, woey de mast over boord en kaakte dwars an de wall, met groot perijckel om te bersten, doch de vlijticheid van ’t volk bracht.” See Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 36–37.

envoys were compensated for by the great hospitality of the many provincial governors and city officials who presented magnificent banquets when the envoy group passed these towns or cities. These occasions offered excellent opportunities for the Dutch delegation, especially Nieuhof, to closely observe China, its cities and its people, their costume and customs, Chinese houses and their interior decorations, and all other exotic things.¹¹⁶ The group eventually reached Peking on 16 July and they stayed there for around four months awaiting the tribute meeting with Chinese emperor and his officials. After that, they set off from Peking on 16 October and returned to Canton on 28 January 1657.¹¹⁷ The Company had hoped to obtain trading privilege for permanent access to China, but when the envoys eventually returned back to Batavia on 31 March 1657, they had failed to obtain free trade. The Qing government only granted the Dutch the right to pay tribute every eight years, to the disappointment of the Company.¹¹⁸ So the VOC had to content itself with carrying on the China trade via Chinese junks visiting Batavia.

The route north is particularly well depicted in Thévenot's version, which marks the major cities and towns that the envoy group stopped by or passed through on their way to Peking. Although this map (fig. 1.1) only describes the route in a rough geographical sketch, it offers people clear information as to how the envoy travelled through China. As Thévenot explains in the introduction of his version of Nieuhof's work, "I have also

¹¹⁶ The Dutch envoy had been often hospitably treated by Chinese local officials. See Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 45, 56, 73, 74, 77, etc.

¹¹⁷ The general description of the Dutch envoy's route and experience in China, see Gianni Guadalupi, *China Revealed: The West Encounters the Celestial Empire* (Vercelli: White Star, 2003), 113–24. Also see Kops, "Not Such an 'Unpromising Beginning': The First Dutch Trade Embassy to China, 1655–1657," 553–58.

¹¹⁸ On the achievements gained in the first Dutch envoy visit to China, see Kops, "Not Such an Unpromising Beginning: The First Dutch Trade Embassy to China, 1655–1657," 535–78.

had the route engraved in the shape of a maritime map, which is one of the most remarkable parts in this *Relation*, as it shows people who were under the Dutch mission marked exactly their path and route, and therefore it will serve as a standard to examine maps of China.”¹¹⁹

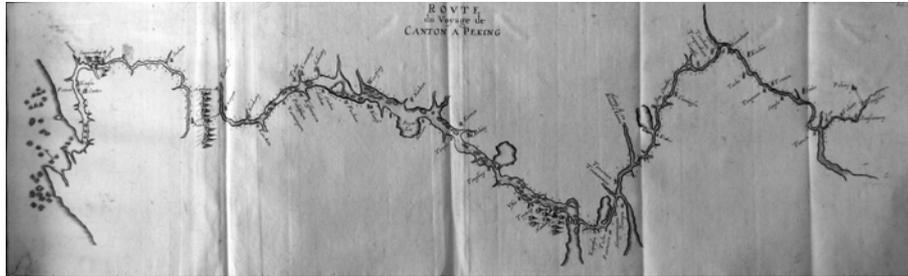


Figure 1.1. Map of the route of the Dutch envoy visit in China in Thévenot’s *Relation*, 1666.

Thévenot’s comment affirms the credibility of Nieuhof’s experience in China. In Van Meurs’s edition, this route is also represented but it is somewhat different (fig. 1.2). Like the different styles of text and illustrations, the map in Thévenot’s version is concise and simple and shows only the route, while in Van Meurs’s edition the route is traced on a map of China, which may be based on Martini’s *Atlas*. Comparing both of them with a modern map (fig. 1.3) of China on which are identified all the cities and towns the Dutch envoys passed, one finds that the maps in both books represent a rather accurate route of the Dutch embassy in China. Unlike Martini’s map, which generally represents China from a distance, Nieuhof’s map and the descriptions in the text enable the readers to follow his travels through China.

¹¹⁹ Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, Introduction, unnumbered.



Figure 1.2. Map of the route of the Dutch envoy visit in China from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

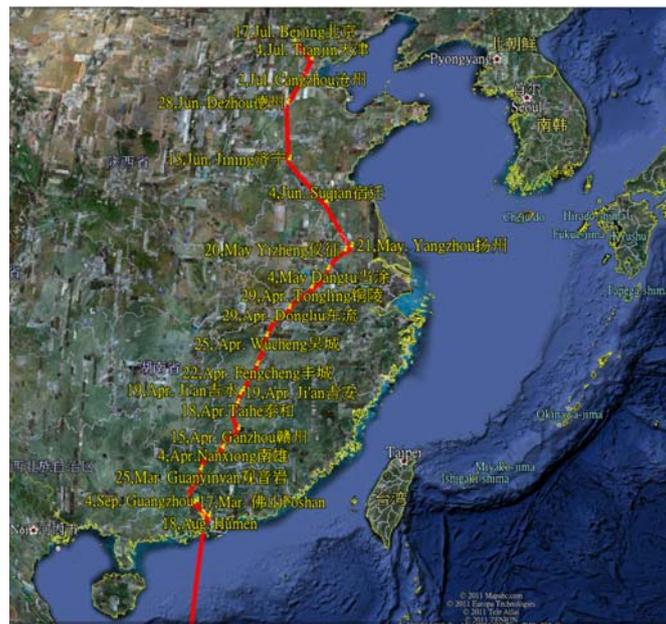


Figure 1.3. Map showing the Dutch envoy route in China from 1655 to 1657.

1.4 The Paris manuscript

The Paris manuscript is in brown hardcovers between which there are ten signatures of papers bound by cotton thread. Each signature consists of twelve sheets of paper and each of these is folded in half; so the twelve sheets of large paper become twenty-four smaller pieces of paper measuring 24cm by 17cm.¹²⁰

In the search for the circumstances how the Paris manuscript was produced, a poem written by the contemporary poet Joachim Oudaen about the experiences of the painter Neun (probably the Jan van Goyen follower, Pieter de Neyn [1597-1639]) of being caught in a downpour reveals a way of drawing common at that time, that is, artists made sketches on the spot and executed finished drawings later in their studios based on these sketches:

“Neun, who likes to draw landscapes, sets out for the open fields,
But soon the sun pales and the air (loses) its sweetness.
He watches the clouds (harbingers of a heavy downpour)
And shortly he feels drop upon little drop: (the threat of a rain shower)
.....
He gets home so thoroughly soaked, dirty and wet
That he resembles a big friendly dog without a tail or a drowned cat.
This time he remembers something better than the appearance of
meadows and fields,
And, so that he show it, he takes his brush and paints

¹²⁰ Therefore, there are in total 240 pages and 239 of them are filled with text and drawings and the rest of them remain blank.

And he depicts his adventure, how the wind and rain beat him,
How swiftly his legs moved, just as it appears before you.”¹²¹

Seventeenth-century Dutch artists conventionally followed Karel van Mander’s art theories and drew sketches in portable sketchbooks outdoors, particularly when they travelled to Germany, France, Italy, and newly discovered countries in Asia and Africa. Throughout their journeys to these places, they drew from nature and brought these sketches back to their studios for more refined reproduction. Hence the sketchbook was their constant companion. For instance, Jan van Goyen (1596–1656) made more than a thousand drawings, a significant number of which were made in the open air. He always put a sketchbook in his pocket when he left home. Although few of his numerous sketchbooks are still intact, the one in the Bredius-Kronig collection presents a good example of what a sketchbook looks like and how the sketches were made.¹²² After returning to their studios, the sketches were either used as source for paintings or further elaborated into drawings for sale.¹²³ This was particularly the case for artists who had journeyed to foreign lands. Allaert van Everdingen and Jacob van Ruisdael, for instance, made drawings of Scandinavian landscapes when they travelled there, and Herman Saftleven drew the scenery of German towns and so forth during his journey in Germany.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Peter Sutton, *Masters of 17th-Century Dutch Landscape Painting* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1987), 11.

¹²² See Edwin Buijsen, *The Sketchbook of Jan Van Goyen from the Bredius-Kronig Collection* (The Hague: The Foundation: Bredius Genootschap, 1993).

¹²³ Many drawings had a highly finished quality for sale by Dutch artists in the seventeenth century. On the idea of finished drawings, see Francis Waring Robinson and Sheldon Peck, *Fresh Woods and Pastures New: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Drawings from the Peck Collection* (Chapel Hill, NC: Ackland Art Museum, 1999), 11–13.

¹²⁴ Wolfgang Stechow, *Dutch Landscape Painting of the Seventeenth Century* (1968; repr. Oxford: Phaidon, 1981), 167–69.

It is very likely that Nieuhof followed a similar procedure, making sketches outdoors and reworking the drawings afterwards. More specifically, he would use a sketchbook to quickly take down in pencil, chalk, or watercolour what he saw of cities, towns, architecture, plants, and whatever else seemed worthwhile to him in China. Afterwards, he would have reworked these rough sketches when he returned to Batavia or the Netherlands. Therefore it is unlikely that the Paris manuscript (the account presented to the Gentlemen Seventeen) was the original sketchbook used by Nieuhof on the spot, especially as the accompanying text has been very neatly written. A deeper review of its characteristics will further prove this argument.

In the text and drawings of the Paris manuscript there are two series of numbers marked in the upper right or left hand corner; one is written in pencil and the other in pen.¹²⁵ The pencilled numbers appear consistently on the pages filled with text and drawings, indicating the sequence of the specific page in the whole manuscript. The pen-marked numbers, however, are not consistent and only appear on pages filled with drawings.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that another series of numbers occasionally appears in the middle of some drawings, which do not correspond with the two above-mentioned series of numbers, but seem to coincide with the specific sequence of the drawings.¹²⁶ Taking the drawing in (figure 1.4), for

¹²⁵ The two sets of page numbers written in pencil and ink are actually different from each other. The numbers in pencil are paginated from the beginning to the end, including the text and the drawings. The numbers in sepia ink run from drawing f7 (1) to drawing f29 (7), then from drawing f35 (11) to drawing f46 (17), and stop at drawing f49 (19). This sepia ink is quite similar to the ink used to illustrate the frame.

¹²⁶ Moreover, the numbers from drawing fol. 132 (59) to drawing fol. 229 are marked in very light sepia ink within the frame, at some random place in the drawing. Sometimes, they are not consistent with the number marked outside of the frame. For instance, in one drawing, the number outside the frame is fol. 77, but fol. 78. In this case, it is possible that Nieuhof initially had plans for the number of the drawings but made changes in the later actual execution.

example, the number “155” (fig. 1.4.1) is marked in pencil on the upper right, corner indicating the page number of this drawing in the whole manuscript, while another number “n°71” in red ink (fig. 1.4.2) appears in the middle of this drawing. By counting its sequence in the drawings in the manuscript, we find that this drawing is the seventy-first of the eighty-one drawings. The existence of these two series of numbers suggests the possibility that the number and content of the drawings was planned and organized before the production of the whole manuscript began. That said, it is likely that the manuscript was carefully arranged in the stable environment of an artist’s studio or a printer’s shop well after the images and text were first drafted.



Figure 1.4. Drawing folio 155 in the Paris manuscript.

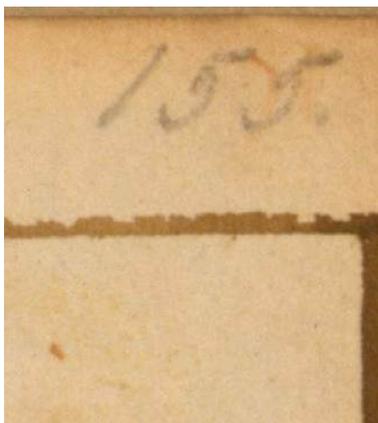


Figure 1.4.1. Number 155 on the right-hand corner of the drawing folio 155.



Figure 1.4.2. Number 71 in the middle of the drawing folio 155.

As a matter of fact, other details that show that the Paris manuscript is a reproduction. First of all, all the sheets of paper are of the same quality and on some of the pages a cross-shaped watermark is recognizable. This is the upper part of a common seventeenth-century watermark (fig. 1.5),¹²⁷ which indicates that all these papers came from the same supplier rather than from scattered sources, and that this album is not a collection of loose pieces of work.

¹²⁷ For more information about such watermarks, see Frits Lugt, *Dessins flamands du dix-septième siècle* (Brussels: Bibliothèque Royale Albert I, 1972), 130, cat.91.

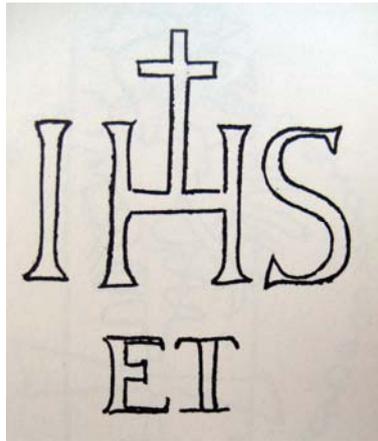


Figure 1.5. Watermark in the paper of the Paris manuscript.

Second, it can be seen that the whole text is written in the same sepia ink and that all the drawings are depicted in the same pencil, chalk, ink, or watercolour. Given the fact that the Dutch envoys spent one and a half years travelling along waterways from south China to Peking and that they encountered countless severe storms and various difficulties, it would be extremely difficult, if not entirely impossible, for Nieuhof to have had either the proper environment or the time to produce such a well-executed and well-preserved manuscript. Consequently, it is likely that this manuscript was produced afterwards rather than on the spot during the journey.

Thirdly, there are graphite grids regulating the text so that it presents a neat appearance and there are rectangular frames in dark brown ink that delineate the boundaries of the sketch. Moreover, some frames of the drawings are unevenly trimmed and some letters in the text appear beyond the binding thread, where they could not have been written after binding.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ For instance, the frame is incomplete in the drawings f23, f103, f112 and f130. And some letters on page 100, which have been folded in the same signature as page 117, are written in the narrow folding space.

Therefore, the binding and trimming apparently took place after the production of the text and the drawings.

These features of the appearance of the manuscript reveal that this is not a sketchbook carried by Nieuhof during his journey in China; instead, it is a reproduction made in a stable environment after the completion of the journey. That is to say, there must have been other original sketches made by Nieuhof on site, which I would just call the original sketches rather than the Paris manuscript. Except for the aforementioned sketches mentioned by Thévenot and Hendrik Nieuhof, the likelihood of the existence of original sketches is supported by the case of the English artist William Alexander (1767–1816) who had an experience similar to that of Nieuhof. Alexander made a great number of drawings of China when he accompanied the British envoy to visit the Chinese emperor Qian-Long's court in 1792–94 and published the watercolours of China at the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹²⁹ Considering that Alexander made endless sketches and drawings, of which some 870 survive, it is not difficult to imagine that Nieuhof also produced a great number of sketches in his journey.¹³⁰ If that is the case, these original sketches have unfortunately been lost.

1.5 The authorship of the Paris manuscript

Blussé and Falkenburg have discussed whether the authorship of the Paris manuscript should be attributed to Johan Nieuhof in their essays, but

¹²⁹ William Alexander was appointed as one of the draughtsmen to the English Envoy to China in 1792. His illustrations of China were later published in the book on this journey. See Erasme Gower, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China, Including Cursory Observations Made, and Information Obtained, in Travelling through That Ancient Empire and a Small Part of Chinese Tartary* (London, 1797). The remarkable series of prints in this book came to be a significant source of China in the eighteenth century. See also Frances Wood, "Closely Observed China: from William Alexander's sketches to his published work," *British Library Journal* 24 (Spring 1998): 98–121.

¹³⁰ On the sketches made by William Alexander, see Wood, "Closely Observed China: From William Alexander's Sketches to His Published Work," 98.

they hold different opinions on this issue. Based on an analysis of the artists' working method—specifically that they were first depicted in pencil and chalk and later in pen—and the comparison with the two maps made by Nieuhof, Falkenburg argues that Nieuhof was only involved in the preliminary depiction in black chalk, and that someone else improved the rough sketches.¹³¹ That is to say, the drawings in the Paris manuscript were co-made by Nieuhof and some unknown draftsman and Nieuhof was not involved in the final phase of producing the manuscript that was supposed to be submitted to the VOC.¹³² This complex assumption could explain some inconsistent depictions in pencil, chalk, and pen, and some coarse and unreasonable representations of China; but there is no direct evidence that points to the existence of an unknown draftsman.

As a matter of fact, to explain the coarse and inconsistent depictions in pencil and chalk and in pen, however, a much simpler and more likely explanation should not be ignored, namely that Nieuhof was not a professional draftsman and he needed to recompose the images again and again. In addition to Nieuhof's occupation and his personal interests, which were mainly travel and trade as discussed above, the technical analysis of his works suggests that he was not a terribly good artist. The two maps entitled “de Kerck valley van ‘t Eylant Sant Helena” help substantiate this point.¹³³ They are supposed to have been made on Nieuhof's return voyage to Holland in 1658,¹³⁴ and scholars are certain that Nieuhof made them

¹³¹ Ibid., 73.

¹³² Ibid., 79.

¹³³ These two maps are donated by Mr. J. T. Bodel Nijenhuis. He has also discussed these two maps; see Nijenhuis, “Johan Nieuhof,” 44–46.

¹³⁴ They are now collected in the library of Leiden University and the number of these two maps is: UB Bijzondere Collecties (KL); Bodel Nijenhuis; COLLBN 002–12–037; COLLBN 002–12–099.

because one is signed “Nieuhoff Fecit” (Nieuhof made [this]).¹³⁵ One map of the valley on the island Saint Helena (fig. 1.6) depicts its subject from a bird’s-eye view and displays the massed array of hills with marks, which are explained in the right column. A group of Dutch ships appears in the harbour near the entrance to the valley. Tiny figures engaged in a battle are depicted here and there between the hills; and two groups of people stand out of the landscape at the lower right corner of the map. Although this map contains much information, compared with some contemporary professional maps, for instance, the manuscript map of Ceylon (fig. 1.7) made at the request of Rijcklof van Goens in 1666,¹³⁶ it is obvious that Nieuhof’s map lacks specificity and refinement. Nieuhof’s perspective and the brush strokes used to present the hills, figures, and other elements are too rough to be helpful to sailors or explorers in this foreign land.

¹³⁵ See Nijenhuis, “Johan Nieuhof,” 44–46; also see Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 71. “Fecit” always appeared in the works of art in early-modern times, which implies the artist made it.

¹³⁶ Copies have been made in 1670 at Batavia and again in 1683 made in Middelburg. See Zandvliet, *Mapping for Money*, 133–134.



Figure 1.6. Johan Nieuhof, “Affenbeelding van ‘t eijlandt Sant Helena,” 40×51 cm, 1658, Leiden University Library, COLLBN 002–12–037.



Figure 1.7. Manuscript map of Ceylon made at the request of Rijcklof van Goens in 1666, Middelburg. Bibliotheque Nationale, Coll. Société de Géographie 2.

The other map (fig. 1.8) shares many similarities with the drawing of a Chinese river gorge—folio 35 in the Paris manuscript (fig. 1.9)—particularly in the manner of depicting the shape of the hills next to the water. In both works, there are two ranges of mountains standing opposite each other and they are represented as being of an enormous size. Moreover, the mountains in both works have been rendered with watercolour. These similarities suggest that they are made by the same hand, namely, Nieuhof; and the coarse brushstroke also indicates that his artistic skills are not professional. Therefore, when considering the authorship of the Paris manuscript and dealing with its inconsistent representations and coarse depictions, Nieuhof’s lack of artistic skill should be considered first, a point we will return to in later chapters.



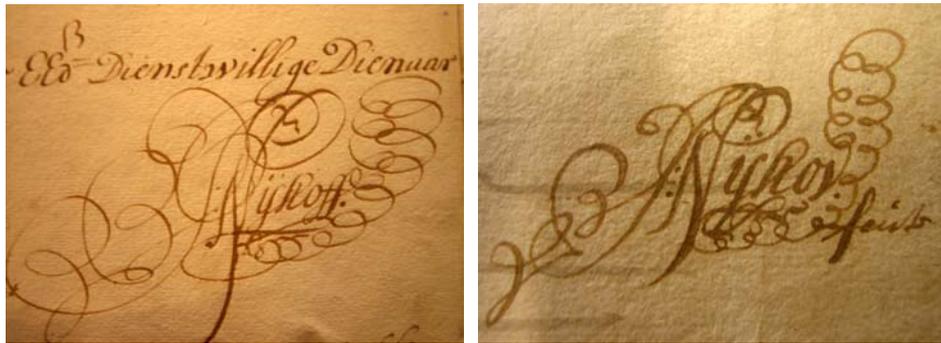
Figure 1.8. Johan Nieuhof, “De Kerck-valley van ‘t Eijlant Sant-Helena,” 40.5×51.5 cm, 1658, Leiden University Library, COLLBN 002–12–099.



Figure 1.9. Drawing folio 35 in the Paris manuscript.

Apart from his artistic skill, other evidence, including his signature and his written account, suggests that Nieuhof is indeed the author of the Paris manuscript. In the inscription of this manuscript, the signature “Nieuhoff” (fig. 1.10, *A*) appears on the right corner. Although it is more smoothly and beautifully written than the signatures on the maps (as shown in figure 1.10, *B*), they share the same style of writing. The slight difference can be attributed to the fact that they were made under quite different circumstances—those on the maps while on the journey and that on the Paris manuscript being produced specifically for the Gentlemen Seventeen during Nieuhof’s stay in Amsterdam. Moreover, the similarities in handwriting are more obvious if we compare the writing in the text of the Paris manuscript (fig. 1.11) and the captions of the maps (fig. 1.12). For instance, the way of writing the letters “h” and “m” are exactly the same. As the maps and the Paris manuscript were finished accomplished in the same

year, the similarity of the handwriting suggests that Nieuhof made the Paris manuscript.



(A)

(B)

Figure 1. 10. Nieuhof's Signatures. *A*, the signature signed on the Paris manuscript; *B*, the signature signed on the map "De Kerck-valley van 't Eijlant Sant-Helena."

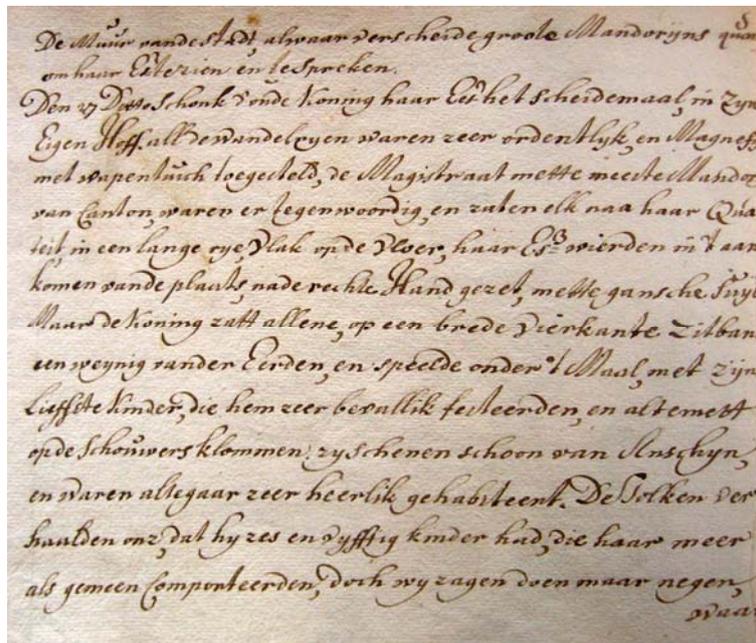


Figure 1.11. Handwriting in the Paris manuscript.



Figure 1.12. Handwriting on the map “De Kerck-valley van ‘t Eijlant Sant-Helena.”

Besides the handwriting, Nieuhof’s accounts from different sources also prove his authorship of the Paris manuscript, a point specifically discussed by Blussé. In the course of looking for the source of Nieuhof’s printed book on China, he found many valuable documents including Nieuhof’s 1669 letter to the directors of the Amsterdam chamber.¹³⁷ In this letter, in which he argues that he was not guilty and should not be charged, he traces his career from 1653, the year he entered into VOC service:

¹³⁷ The handwriting in the letter to the directors of the VOC is however much clumsy. But considering the fact that this letter was written in a circumstance when Nieuhof was anxious and eager to prove his innocence in 1669, eleven years after the production of the Paris manuscript, his handwriting is somehow different from the Paris manuscript would be understandable.

To this day, when I am writing this letter to defend my honour and the worth of my writings. On 23 October 1653, I set sail from the Vlie in the service of the Amsterdam Chamber on the small yacht the *Kalff*, as a midshipman with a salary of *f*12 per month. After a long and difficult voyage, I arrived in Batavia. After some months, I was enlisted as a steward to join the renowned embassy to visit the Emperor of China. After having returned [from China], I was ordered to keep the ship's log on the ship the *Peerle*, on which I sailed for the Fatherland, where I arrived safely in 1658.

Here I received orders from Your Honours to describe the journey I had made, which I immediately obeyed with pleasure, putting my best effort into it, stretching my meagre intelligence to the utmost. After some months, I submitted this [the description of the journey] to Your Honours at a plenary board meeting, together with a travel map, for which I did gain no little honour alike unto that of various men of learning at that time. Afterwards, this encouraged me so much, that, on 23 October 1658, I departed from the Vlie aboard the beautiful return ship, the *Arnhem*, with the rank of junior merchant and arrived safely in Batavia again on 8 July 1659.

(tot heden toe, wanneer ik dese brieff tot verdediging van mijn eer en goedt schrijve. 't Is dan zulx dat ik den 23 October inden jaare 1653 met het jachtje 't *Kalff* voor de Kamer Amsterdam als adelborst à *f*12 per maendt uit het Vlie ben 't seil gegaen, en naa een seer lange en swaare voyagie alhier te Batavia aan landt getreden. Naer 't verloop van enige maanden,

zoo ben ik meede op de roll gestelt om het vermaarde gezantschap aen den Grooten Cham van Chijna en Tartarije als hoffmeester bij te wonen. Naa 't weder keren, zijn mij de scheeps-boecken gelast te houden op 't schip de *Peerle*, alwaar ik weeder meede naa 't Vaderlandt ben vertrocken, en in den jaare 1658 aldaer geluckig aangelandt.

Hier ontving ik last van Uwer Edle om de gedaane voyagie te beschrijven het welke ik ook zeer gaarne en aanstonds ben naagekomen, voor zoo vele mijn gering en kleen verstandt vermochte, en dieses aen uwer Edle in volle vergaderinge naa enige maanden tijds overgeleverdt: benefens een Reys-kaarte, 't welk benefens mij doender tijdt bij verscheide geleerde luden geen kleine eer toebachte, en naderhandt zoodanig heeft aangemoedight dat ik den 23^{en} October 1658, met het kostelijke retourschip Arnhem uit het Vlie voor onderkoopman ben uitgelopen en [...] alhier ter rheede voor Batavia den 8^{en} Julij 1659 wederom geluckig was geanckert.)¹³⁸

He also discusses his experiences in this period in his book *The East Indies*, which reads as the follows:

After we had sufficiently refreshed ourselves here [Saint Helena], and provided what necessaries we thought fit, or could get, we left his island the last day of May. We continued our former course, and without any remarkable accident, came in sight of

¹³⁸ See Johan Nieuhof's letter to the VOC in Amsterdam on 15 Jan. 1669, which is collected in the National Archives of the Netherlands, VOC 1266, fol. 1007. It is unsure whether this ship's book is about the ship the *Peerle* or about the journey of China.

Holland, and the 6th of July 1658 arrived happily at Amsterdam. I took up my lodgings at my brother Henry Nieuhoff's, whom as well as most of my other friends, I had the good fortune to find in good health. Many of the most curious persons of that place came daily to see me, to take a view of the Chinese characters, and other draughts I had brought along with me.

After I had tarried for three months in Holland, and dispatched my business both here and in Zeeland, I delivered the journal of my late voyage into China to my brother, in order to have it reviewed and printed, at the request of several persons of quality; with an intention to take a second voyage to the East-Indies, with the first fair opportunity, which was soon after offered me by the directors of the East-India company. 5 ships lay then ready for the East-Indies under the command of Mr. Adrian Aelmonde, viz. the *Arnheim*, burthen 500 tuns, with 40 guns and 430 men, John Tymensz master; the second the *Pearl* and three yachts; I was ordered aboard the first. We set sail all together from the Ulic the 22^d of Dec. 1658.¹³⁹

The experiences after his journey in China described here are basically consistent with the account in the above-mentioned letter. Both include a lot of information, not only about the requirement to describe the journey in China and his efforts to accomplish it, but also the exact duration of his stay in the Netherlands. This is very important because it implies that he had enough time to finish the report during his stay in the Netherlands, as he claims in this letter. The letter does not mention the exact date of his arrival

¹³⁹ Nieuhof, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, 159.

in the Netherlands but specifies the date of his departure for Asia as 23 October 1658; while in the book *The East Indies*, the date of his arrival in the Netherlands is given as 6 July 1658, and his departure happens three months later without giving an exact date. If both correct, the duration of his stay appears to have been more than three months from 6 July to 23 October 1658.

The duration of his stay in the Netherlands can also be checked through the VOC archival records of ships, the *Peerle* and the *Arnhem*, which were taken by Nieuhof to sail to and from the Netherlands. According to the very detailed archival record, the *Peerle* (which was built in 1651 and belonged to the chamber of Amsterdam), departed from Batavia for Wielingen on 18 December 1657 and arrived at the Cape on 6 March 1658 and stayed there for thirteen days, and finally arrived at Wielingen on 24 July 1658.¹⁴⁰ The record also shows that the *Arnhem* (built in 1654 for the Amsterdam Chamber as well), departed from Vlie on 22 October 1658 and arrived in Batavia on 8 July 1659.¹⁴¹ The VOC's records of these two ships confirm Nieuhof's accounts in his letter and in *The East Indies*, although the sailing records have him staying in the Netherlands for just under three months. More important, they indirectly verify the issue that Nieuhof had time to produce the Paris manuscript, because the Paris manuscript was supposed to have been made on 3 August, 1658, ("de derden van den oogstm[aan] A.D. 1658"), which was during Nieuhof's stay in the Netherlands according to all the evidence.

Nieuhof's letter also confirms that after he returned to the Netherlands he received orders from the directors of the VOC to make a description of

¹⁴⁰ See De VOC. Scheepvaart tussen Nederland en Azië 1595–1795, voyage 5456.3. <http://www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/DAS/detailVoyage/96284>

¹⁴¹ See De VOC. Scheepvaart tussen Nederland en Azië 1595–1795, voyage 0894.2.

his journey in China and that he fulfilled this commission with a narrative and a travel map. This means that besides the specific commission mentioned in the instruction to the ambassadors before the embassy visit to China, Nieuhof was also required to describe this journey after he returned to the Netherlands. This interpretation suggests that “the description,” which we suppose to be the Paris manuscript, was probably produced afterwards rather than being made on spot. This may serve as further support for the previous assumption that the Paris manuscript is not the sketchbook used by Nieuhof in China. The presence of Nieuhof’s signature, a comparison of the handwriting in this and his other works, and the consistent accounts in his letter and books all make it reasonable to conclude that Nieuhof is the author of the Paris manuscript.

Conclusion

On the basis of the arguments adduced above, we can reconstruct the historical moment and the process of the reproduction of the manuscript as follows. In 1653, Nieuhof set out to Batavia from the island of Vlie. After a few months in Batavia, the governor-general and council ordered him to join the embassy to China as steward (no exact date). During the embassy’s visit to China, he made many sketches of landscapes, human figures, and other exotic matters during the embassy visit in China. After the visit in China in 1657, he returned to Batavia on the ship the *Peerle* and from there he sailed with the VOC fleet to the Netherlands on a passage during which he kept the ship’s logbook. The passage was interrupted at the island of St. Helena where at the beginning of 1658 Nieuhof produced two drawings with topographical information. The *Peerle* arrived in Holland in July and Nieuhof lodged with his brother, Hendrik, in Amsterdam for three months.

Not long after his arrival in Amsterdam, he was required to submit a report to describe the journey in China. With a lot of effort, he completed the report and submitted it to the directors of the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC on 3 August 1658, within a month of his arrival in Amsterdam. During his stay in the Netherlands, he also went to Zealand to settle some business, and he was visited by many people who were curious about his trip to China and his knowledge about China. This may have further prompted Hendrik to publish his brother's experiences. It is not clear whether Johan had any thought of doing this before his journey through China. But certainly from the first half of the seventeenth century, exotic travel publications became popular in Holland; and Amsterdam was virtually the centre of travel publications, which reaped both publisher and the author plenty of profit. However, because the young adventurer could not wait any longer to proceed with the publication, he left all the materials to his brother to publish his travel account. In that sense, the Paris manuscript may be seen as a preparation for the publication of the travel journal.

Moreover, as Nieuhof had devoted most of his energy to the exploration of the world and the trade business, the Paris manuscript should be regarded as a work made by a happy storyteller and amateur artist who was interested in the exotic and fanciful world. This should serve as a good foundation for studying the text about and drawings of China in the Paris manuscript in detail.

Chapter 2 The Text of the Paris Manuscript

2.1 Nieuhof's account in the Paris manuscript

The text in the Paris manuscript starts with Nieuhof's dedication to the directors of the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, while the Van Meurs edition is dedicated more specifically to Hendrik Dirksz and Cornelis Witsen, the mayor of Amsterdam and one of the directors of the VOC, respectively.¹⁴²

In the dedication of the Paris manuscript, Nieuhof states that although he has seen many fanciful scenes in Brazil and other places, the elegant and antique scenes of China far exceed all other places besides Europe.¹⁴³ The body of the manuscript consists mainly of descriptive text embellished by eighty-one drawings (not including the title page). The bulk of the text concerns the embassy's journey along roads, rivers, and canals via cities, towns, and villages in China and includes superficial descriptions of their appearance, historical background, and legends and customs associated with them. It also contains accounts of some memorable events such as the meetings with the viceroy in Canton and especially the emperor in Peking.

Most descriptions of Chinese cities, towns, and villages are very general, and convey little specific information about them. The lack of specificity may be attributed to several factors. First of all, in most places that the embassy visited, the Dutch visitors had very little time to stay or

¹⁴² As discussed, the Witsen family had close relationship with Johan Nieuhof that he not only recommended Nieuhof to the service of the VOC but also helped him to clean his name in 1669 when he was claimed of corruption.

¹⁴³ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 31. The Dutch text is "Ik beken zeer geerne dat mij in Brazil en elders veel wonderwerdige zaken bejegend zijn, maar de herlike antiquiteiten van Chijna passieren 't, mijns oordeels, altemaal wat buiten den ruymen ommering van Europa te zien is." But he also mentions that Chinese people's wisdom and freedom had been deprived by Tartar.

observe anything in detail. Second, in some big and well-known cities such as Canton, Nanjing, and Peking, the Dutch envoys were confined to their lodgings, as Thévenot mentions in his book. They were also often rejected by Chinese local people on their journey.¹⁴⁴ For instance, when they passed the county of Dongguang (东光县) and wished to see an iron lion in a commercial market, “those wicked Chinese closed their city gate in our faces and hid fearfully in their houses (de snoode Chijnezen slooten ons de poort voor de neus en verstaken haar uit vreze in de huizen.)”¹⁴⁵ Even though they climbed the city wall to have a look at the inner city, they found that “the Tartars had undertaken so much building work here people cannot find that city within the city (maar de Tartaren hadden ‘t hier zoo vertimmert, dat men dat stad in de stad niet vinden kon).”¹⁴⁶ What is more, although they had the assistance of Chinese interpreters, it was still difficult for the Dutch envoys to understand or learn much about Chinese customs.

Under these circumstances, it was not very easy to offer detailed and specific descriptions of Chinese cities and towns. Nevertheless, Nieuhof tried his best to record what he saw in China and to do so objectively. In order to give the reader a more intuitive impression and a better explanation of what Chinese cities and objects looked like, he made analogies to things with which his Western readers were familiar. For instance, describing the town of Wuhu (芜湖), he writes, “It excels in beautiful houses and pagodas. At each corner of the small river is situated a strong blockhouse, with ramparts and loopholes, built after our manner and design.” (In schone huizen en pagoden is zij zeer uitmuntende. Op elke punt van de kleine revier

¹⁴⁴ Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, Introduction, unnumbered.

¹⁴⁵ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 48.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

leidt een sterk blokhuis, die met borstweeren en schietgaten na onze maniere geboudt zij.)¹⁴⁷ And when he writes about Chinese cotton, which was strange and exotic to contemporary Dutch readers, he notes, “The cotton is sown here every year and grows in the fields just as our buckwheat does, when it has finished flowering. (Het word hier alle jaar gezaidt en staat op het land als bij onz de boekweit, wanneer diezelve heeft uitgebloidt).”¹⁴⁸ Through this kind of analogy, Dutch readers who had never seen China with their own eyes could imagine Chinese things in their mind’s eye by reference to things of which they had firsthand experience. In this way, Nieuhof found a way to connect the exotic in the foreign land and the familiar in the readers’ real life, and so avoided the mistake made by Marco Polo, who was called “Messer Marco Milioni” as he always exaggerated what he saw in China.

In addition to the general descriptions of the appearance of Chinese cities, towns, and villages, Nieuhof also highlighted Chinese scenes or objects that intrigued him. For instance, he went on at length in his description of the Chinese cormorant, particularly about how Chinese fisherman trained this bird to catch fish, and the Chinese dragon boat, which the Dutch embassy group encountered at *Shaobo* (邵伯).¹⁴⁹ He also recorded in detail important occasions and the associated dress that impressed him as being emblematic of Chinese customs. For instance, he describes the grand banquet thrown by the old and young viceroys in a suburb of Canton as follows:

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 47.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 44, 46.

On 15 October, the viceroys invited the ambassadors to a banquet outside of the city [Canton], where ten beautiful tents were set on a flat piece of land. The viceroys and the *toutangh* (deputy magistrate) sat together on a costly carpet, and the first tent on the left was arranged for the ambassadors. Between the two rows of tents stood another small tent for the musicians and on the right side, they played the trumpet and other wind instruments. The ambassadors were escorted to the viceroys by two mandarins and, after the proper reciprocal greets on both sides, they returned to their tent. Just at this moment, a majordomo had dishes carried through the crush of people. He wore a blue robe with a dragon and other monsters embroidered in gold thread and had for two waiters set an individual table each in front of the two viceroys and the *toutangh* and the table was covered with dark red cloth. Then he covered the table brimming with dishes cooked in a strange manner and confectionery before each ambassador. There were more than forty solid silver dishes on each table and the food in each dish was different. After the welcome toast, the ambassadors were invited to eat. The viceroys seemed very merry and showed their curiosity, asking about all manner of matters in Holland through their majordomo and motioned to the ambassadors to drink from a golden cup, and they downed [toasts] one after the other. In the middle of the meal, the ambassadors asked someone to serve the viceroys and the *toutangh* a glass of Spanish wine which they liked so much they no longer wanted to drink *sampsoe*. We were very awed by the marvellous and splendid ways that these

heathen princes lived, but most impressive was the good order and skill with which they managed their affairs under the press of so many people that it seemed like being in a private family. (Den 15e October wierden Haar E.^s van d'onderkoningen genoodt op een banket buiten de stadt, alwaar tien heerlike tenten in een effen plein stonden uitgespandt. Hare Majesteiten met de toutangh zaten nevens malkander op een kostelijk tapijt, d'eerste tent aan de slinke hand was geordeonneerd voor Haar E.^s, tusschen beyde vleugels stond een ander voor de musicanten en op de punt van de rechte en slinke zij vertoonden haar de konstenaars met basuynen en Andre blaasinstrumenten. Haar E.^s wierden van 2 mandorijns voor de koningen geleid en, na behoorlijke eerbewijzing aan weerzijden, van daar tot in haar tent. Ondertusschen quam de hoff meester door den drang van 't volk en liet de spijsz aanbrenghen. Hij was gekleed met een blauwe zijde rok, voll draken en andre gedrochten van goudt geborduurd en liet door 2 dieners voor beyde majesteiten en de toutang elk een tafel zetten, die met karmozijnrood taffeta gedekt was. Daarna wierd Haar E.^s mede een tafel voorgezet, voll van allerhande spijsz en suykerwerk, op een bijzondere wijze, zeer raar gebacken. Op elken disch stonden meer als 40 schotels van zilver massijff en vertoonden elk een bijzonder gericht. En nadat de wellkomst gedronken was, wierd de spijsz ontdekt en Haar E.^s genodigtt om te eeten. De koningen toonden haar beydegaar zeer vrolik en lieten door haren hoffmeester zeer cureus na alle gelegenheid van Holland vragen, wenkten Haar E.^s altemet om lustig te zijn met goude koppen, die zij reyz op reyz

schoonmaakten. In 't midden van de maaltijd lieten Haar E.^s de majesteiten en te toutang elk een glas Spanse wijn langhen, 'twelk haar zoo well geviell dat se naderhandt geen sampsoe meer wilden drinken. Wij waren altegaar verwondert over de pracht en praal van deze heydens, maar meest over die goede orde en hoe behendig elk zijn ampt wist waar te nemen onder den drang van zoo veel menschen, daar 't ende van verloren scheen).¹⁵⁰

The very detailed and vivid description of the place where the banquet was held, the manner in which the ambassadors were treated, and the communication between the ambassadors and the viceroys immerses the reader in the scene. All this must have been written on the basis of Nieuhof's own observation. Apparently, he was curious about the Chinese majordomo's costume, the strangely prepared food, the bizarre musical instruments, and the ways in which the ambassadors were waited upon, the splendour of the banquet, and the good order by which the people were governed. And from this account, we can also see that Nieuhof did not simply record the Dutch envoy's activities in China; instead, he comprehensively recorded their overall circumstances and selected things that were curious to him. More important, he also wrote down the interaction with Chinese people and his feelings and impressions about what he saw. That is to say, he was emotional involved in his record of China.

This is even more obvious if one reads his moving account about the ruins of war that the Dutch envoys encountered frequently on the way to Peking. When he tried to give the background of the old and young viceroys,

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 33.

especially how the Ming emperor executed their fathers and how the Tartar Khan encouraged them to take revenge, he said,

It can be believed that since they suffered harm and misfortune, the cost was passed on to them twice, because we have travelled over rubble of mortar and brick for some miles through various places in the province of Canton, without knowing if towns or villages once stood there. ('t Is te geloven dat zij sederd haar leedt en ongeluk dubbeld verhaald hebben, want men reist in de provintie Canton op zommige plaats en eenige mijlen weegs over puin van kalk en steen, zonder te weten off er steden off dorpen gestaan hebben.)¹⁵¹

The most moving account of the civil war is perhaps Nieuhof's description of the destruction of Canton.

It is said that the city before the war was so prosperous and crowded that every day five or six people were crushed to death at the city gate. If we consider the multitude of the surrounding villages and hamlets, this saying is believable. The city had been attacked by force. The Tartars told us that in the last siege, more than 80,000 men were defeated, besides those who were dead because of hunger or other miserable things. And since I was told the whole siege situation, here I should briefly review the important things that had happened then. [. . .] Now seven years have passed and during this period, the city is so populous that it

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 34.

almost regains the previous prosperous situation under the rule of the viceroys. (Men ziet dat deze stad voor den oorlog zoo voll nering is geweest, daatt er dag an dag door ‘t gedrangh in de poorte vijff à zes menschen doodbleven, ‘twelk well te gelooven is, als men acht slaat op de menigte der omliggende dorpen en gehuchten. Zij is twemaal met geweld van wapens aangetast en overwonnen. De Tartaren verhaalden onz datt er in de leste belegering meer als 80,000 menschen verslagen zijn, behalven diegene die van honger vergaan en anders elendig aan ‘t endtt zijn gekomen, En overmits mij de gansche belegering is opgegeven, zoo zal ik diezelve hier kortlik overloopen om enige bijzondre dingen die daarin zijn voorgevallen. . . Dit is nu eerst voor zeven jaren gepasseerd, binnen welken tijd deze stadt onder de regieringe der vice-rois zoo heft toegenomen, dat ze bijkans weder tot haar voorgaande heerlijkheid geraakt is. En nadat wij van voor deze stadt waren verseildt, als hiervoor geseid, zo bleven wij des nachts aan ‘t vermaarde dorp Foesan.)¹⁵²

This tale of war was obviously told to Nieuhof, who could not have witnessed these attacks, which happened seven years before his visit. Shocked by the horrors of war he also described the ruins of other places, like the city Wan’an (万安) where, “We were astounded by how much damage the Tartars had caused here. Both inside and outside the city, everything has been turned upside down, and is so overgrown with scrub and thickets that no way could be found through it. (Wij zagen met

¹⁵² Ibid., 35–36.

verwondering hoe de Tartaren hier hadden huisgehouden, het licht van binnen en buiten alles overhoop en is met kreupelbos en ruichte zoo dicht begroeidt, datter geen gangen meer te vinden zijn.)”¹⁵³ And he described the ruins in the town of Dongliu (东流): “Only one street has been left standing, the rest of the town has been completely razed by the Tartars, and mortar and brick rubble was all that we could see. (Daar is maar eene straate meer in wezen, die rest is van den Tartaren gans geruijneert en niet van te zien als puin van kalk en steen).”¹⁵⁴ He shows his deep sympathy for the Chinese people who suffered from this war as follows:

The Chinese do not know how to tell enough about how the Tartars have ruled despotically here; on several occasions it has been damaged by force of arms and captured. During the most recent troubles, the Tartars took more than 4,000 wives and daughters of high-ranking officials to the North, where they sold them for a trifling sum and they were forced to sell their bodies for the profit of their godless masters. A miserable life for such persons who were raised in virtuousness and decency... (De Chijnen weten niet genoeg te vertellen hoe de Tartaren hier gedomineert hebben, zij is verscheyde maal met geweld van wapens angetast en overwonnen. In de leste troublen namen de Tartaren meer als 4000 vrouwen en jongvrouwen van de grooten mee na boven, die aldaar voor een klein geld verkocht en gedwongen werden om er lichaam te verhuiren ten proiffite van

¹⁵³ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 41.

er godlooze meesters. Een elendig leven voor zoodane personen, die eerzam en eerlik zijn opgevoedt.)¹⁵⁵

This scene of how the women of officials' families suffered from the war may not have been witnessed directly by Nieuhof, as he would have had little chance to get in touch with them, and it is more likely that he heard this story secondhand from other Chinese. But still, he wrote it down and expressed his sympathy for these women and presented his attitude about the war.

He even claims to have left a poem on the inner wall of the Porcelain Pagoda to protest the horrors of war:

Blood thirsty Bellona,
 What escapes damage,
 When your black torch gleams in the thunder of war,
 Another Troy is here consumed by flames,
 And the family of the king chased away and destroyed.
 (Bloeddorstige Belloon,
 wat blijft er ongeschonden,
 wanneer Uw zwarte toors in 's oorslogsonweer gloeidt.
 Een ander Troja is hier van de vlam verslonden
 En 's konings hoffgezin verjaagt en uitgeroeidt.)¹⁵⁶

Although he may not have been permitted to write a Dutch poem on the wall of the Porcelain Pagoda, this poem not only reflects his attitude

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 43. The Dutch text is "op de muur van 't binnenhoff heb ik tot gedachtenis dit vers gelaten"

towards the horrors of the civil war in China, it also showcases Nieuhof's talents. This is in keeping with the lively style he employs to narrate the interesting experiences he encountered in China. When he describes how curious Chinese people watched the Dutch envoys, he writes,

When we dropped the anchor here to supply ourselves with provisions, almost everyone left the city to come and to look. We had our trumpeters blow that old tune the "Wilhelmus,"¹⁵⁷ which frightened these poor people so much that they fell over each other and scrambled back through the city gate in great confusion. (Toen wij hier't anker lieten vallen om onze te verzorgen van provisie, liep de gansche stad bijkans leeg om te kijken. Wij lieten't oude deuntjen van Wilhelmus blaazen, waarvan deze arme menschen zoo verschrocken, dat ze malkander geweldig overliepen en borsten met groote verbaastheid door de poort in de stad.)¹⁵⁸

The account of this prank adds a lively atmosphere to the whole narrative. It also reflects Nieuhof's sense of humour and personal perspective of his observations in China. Nieuhof does not limit himself to objective descriptions of the appearance of Chinese cities and towns; he also allows himself to become emotionally involved in his experience, freely showing his abhorrence for the destructive power of war and empathizing with the misery of its Chinese victims. Yet this playful Dutchman also shows his humorous side when he encountered interesting and amusing

¹⁵⁷ Nowadays the Dutch national anthem.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

experiences. In this sense, his original report is more like a diary filled with personal emotions and not the dry official report that it is often purported to have been. Such an official report was actually written by the ambassadors themselves.¹⁵⁹

2.2 A comparison with the official report of the ambassadors to the Gentlemen Seventeen

In addition to Nieuhof's sketchbook–cum–travelogue, the directors of the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC also received a minutely-detailed account of the embassy filled with trade information written by one of the ambassadors, which means Nieuhof's account was not strictly necessary to them for business purposes. This report was submitted under the name of Jacob Keijser, as indicated in the title of the first part of the report, "Copy of the diary kept by Jacob Keijser from March 17 to July 17 1656 (Copie dagregister gehouden bij Jacob Keijser van 17 maart tot 17 julij 1656)." However, it is not entirely clear that this was really written by Jacob Keijser himself. According to the instructions issued in Batavia, two secretaries, Leonardus De Leonardis and Hendrik Baron, were assigned to make a record of everything that transpired on the journey,¹⁶⁰ which suggests that this official report was probably written by one or both of these men but signed by Keijser.

Now preserved in the National Archives of the Netherlands, this report is contains two parts. One part is about the supplementary notes (extra information) of the journey and the other part mainly records the Dutch

¹⁵⁹ Access to this valuable official report was made possible thanks to the great help of Prof. Blussé and Jinna Smit.

¹⁶⁰ See "Bataviaes Uitgaand Briefboek," 1655, Instruction fol. 382, the National Archives of the Netherlands, in The Hague, VOC 879.

envoy's daily journey.¹⁶¹ Generally speaking, the entries in the official report, including the date and the Dutch envoy's activities, correspond with those in Nieuhof's Paris manuscript. In both accounts, the names of Chinese cities and towns name are based on Chinese pronunciation, although they sometimes are written with different Dutch spellings—further confirmation that Nieuhof's account was based on direct observation.

One difference between Nieuhof's account and the official report is that the former covers the entire duration of the envoys' journey, including the departure from Batavia in August 1655, the six-month wait in Canton, the journey from Canton to Peking, and the return to Batavia in March 1657, while Jacob Keijser's report records only the Dutch envoy's journey from Canton to Peking, a fact indicated in the title of the second part of the report:

Daily notes of what happened on the journey which commenced in Canton right through China and 5 provinces all the way to Peking, where the Great Cham at present holds his court, written or kept by the merchant Mr Jacob Keijser, the present ambassador in the service of the General Dutch East India Company to the Tartar and Chinese Majesty, for the purpose of entering into a contract with him to obtain permission to trade freely in his realm, and to discuss other related matters.
(Dagelijckse Aenteeckeninge van 't gepasseerde op de reijs gaende uijt Canton recht door China en 5 provintien heen naer Peckin, alwaer den Grooten Cham jegenwoordigh sijn hoff hout,

¹⁶¹ This report is collected in National Archives of the Netherlands, VOC 1220, fol. 253–293 and fol. 410–571.

gedaen off gehouden bij den coopman Sr. Jacob Keijser, present ambassadeur van wegen den staedt der Generale Nederlandsche Oost Indische Compagnie aen den Tartarische en Chineese Majjesteijt gesonden, om met den selven van in sijn rijck lijber en vrij te moogen negotieeren als anders aen dependerende te tracteren.)¹⁶²

From this title, we can see that it mainly records the Dutch envoy's journey from Canton to Peking and that its main purpose is to secure trade privileges from the Qing court. Thus Keijser's report actually differs from Nieuhof's in two significant respects. First, it records the Dutch envoy's daily activities, although occasionally the activity on successive days is combined.¹⁶³ In the account of the Paris manuscript, by contrast, Nieuhof is selective and only relates those parts of the Dutch envoy's itinerary and activities that he thought merited attention. For instance, his account of April 1656 includes only about fifteen days' worth of material; the rest has been omitted. On the other hand, the official report's description of Chinese cities and towns is much more specific and detailed, and so can be used to interpret Nieuhof's account. Therefore, if one combines the accounts in the official report and Nieuhof's account, a more comprehensive and reliable circumstances of the Dutch embassy's journey in China can be reconstructed.

In keeping with the embassy's purpose, to secure the emperor's permission "to trade freely in his country and to sign an exclusive contract with him," the second distinguishing characteristic of the report is that its

¹⁶² National Archives of the Netherlands, VOC 1220, fol. 410r.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, fol. 487r.

description of China is written with a view to highlighting items of commercial interest. This is actually very obvious when comparing this account to the Paris manuscript. For instance, about the city Foshan (佛山), Nieuhof simply notes, “And after we left this city, as described before, we stayed the night at the well-known town of Foesan [Foshan]. (En Nadat wij van voor deze stadt waren verseildt, als hiervoor geseid, zo bleven wij des nachts aan ‘t vermaarde dorp Foesan.)”¹⁶⁴ He gives no other description of this town. But in the official report, considerable space is devoted to analysing the town’s commercial market and goods:

On 18 [March], at Saturday morning at 8 o’clock we passed through the previously mentioned famous textile-weaving village of Foesan, as we left it behind on its eastern side, we saw that it was situated along the river, stretching out on our left hand side, surrounded by a countless number of vessels lying around it, proof and evidence that these people around here do carry out more trade than is done in Canton, and it is certainly not the only staple market of the textile trade, as all kinds of different wares [change hands] and it is a meeting point for the merchants, and happens real exchange. As concerns the piece goods produced and woven at this place, the bulk of them are heavy silk textiles; clothes of gold and silver; some in various colours but most of them black and blue figured satins; also damask either multicolored or plain coloured, whatever the people prefer them to be; brocade; as well as camlet [a certain

¹⁶⁴ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 36.

precious type of fabric] of which the black variety is much in demand here. The last, together with all the said fabrics produced here, is transported in big quantities throughout the entire country, and is particularly in demand in the upper regions like Nanking, Peking and some other large court cities. As far as the wares of little value we have to offer are concerned, such as the assortments for the Japan market of “pelings” [silk-like fabric]¹⁶⁵; “gielens” [gilems/gilams, a type of silk cloth from Persia]; “pangsies” [pangsis, a type of silk cloth from China]; hempen cloth and whatever else comes to mine, they do not have supply here, for they do not have the slightest trade in them, so all of them, yea even those they need for their own use, have to be brought to this place, mostly from Nanking, for those who show very little interest in them. (18^{en} ditto: Saterdagh ‘s morgens ten 8 uijren passeerden voors. vermaerd *En overmits e stoffenwevende dorp Foesan, latende het selve oost en w.:* soo als het langs de rivier gestreckt lach aen onse slinckerhandt met een ontelbare getal vaertuijgen omcingelt leggen, een bewijs en gewis voorteecken omtrent dit volck grooter negotie als in Canton selfs gedreven moet werden, en seecker daer niet alleen de stapel vanden stoffehandel maer oock van alderhande negotie ende vergaderingh der coopluijden of eijgentlijck de beurs. Aengaende de stuck goederen, die te deser plaetse geweven en gemaect werden sijn meest swaare zijde dittos; goude en silvere laecken alderhande van couleuren doch meest swart en blauwe satijnen dittos gefigureert, van gelijcken damasten ‘t sij van

¹⁶⁵ For all of these fabrics, see <http://www.historici.nl/pdf/vocglossarium/VOCGlossarium.pdf>.

verscheijden of een couleur en hoe men die begeert, brockadus, item cammelotten van dewelcke de swarten hier seer begeert, en nevens d'andere voors. hier gemaakt werdende stoffen door 't gantse landt, en voornamentlijck inde bovenquartieren als Nancquin, Peckin en meer andere groote hoven hebbende steden uijtnemende getrocken en bij menichte derwaerts vervoert werden. Belangende de lichte en bij ons getrockene goederen, als daer is de Japanse sorteringe van pelings, gielens ende pangsiens, kennippe lijwaet ende wes meer, hebben se hier om die op te setten de minste handeling niet van, maer moet alle, Jae selfs 't geen se tot haer eijgen gebruijck sijn hebbende, uijt Nanckin en hier voornamentlijck die een weijnich curieus daerop is afgebracht werden.)¹⁶⁶

According to this account, the writer of the official report is apparently very familiar with the textile trade in Asia and very sensitive to the commercial opportunities in China. He not only sees the potential market but even makes plans for future trade with China. As the title indicates, his primary purpose is to get permission to trade freely with China, so it is no wonder that his observations focus on commercial opportunities.

Moreover, the account in the official report also contains more confidential information, such as the viceroy's request for the ambassador's help against Zheng Chenggong,¹⁶⁷ a topic that does not appear in Nieuhof's account. Again, the reason for the absence of such information in Nieuhof's account may be found in the VOC's instruction to the ambassadors. The

¹⁶⁶ See VOC 1220, fol. 411v and 412r.

¹⁶⁷ See VOC 1220, fol. 255.

directors of the VOC in Batavia specifically listed the people who should be allowed to take part in certain important meetings. This list includes the two ambassadors, De Goijer and Keijser, the two junior merchants responsible for recording everything, Leonard de Leonardis and Hendrick Baron, and some other merchants.¹⁶⁸ Nieuhof is not among them, which suggests that he was not qualified to participate in some confidential or otherwise important meetings. On the other hand he shared the same boat as Leonardis so he would probably have been quite well aware of what had been discussed. But he certainly knew that confidential matters in the official report were for the eyes of the Company only and not fit to be inserted in his complimentary gift to the directors, which to express it in current terms had more or less the same function as a commemorative book for the people who sent him out to China. Thanks to the efforts of his brother and the publisher Van Meurs, this graceful little volume would be turned into a really showy coffee-table book with interesting pictures for the curious educated European reader of his time.

It may also be possible that Nieuhof simply was not interested in commercial and military information. Hendrik Nieuhof and Van Meurs would not have had access to the ambassador's official report; nor could Thévenot have had a peep at this report. The VOC was very jealous of keeping its records closed to outsiders. Nieuhof's Paris manuscript and the official ambassador's report nevertheless have a lot in common; they contain similar background information about their narrative subjects, showing that the authors obtained certain knowledge of things in China and that they must have shared that knowledge with each other while travelling.

¹⁶⁸ See VOC 879, "Bataviaes Uitgaand Briefboek," 1655, Instruction, fol. 392.

For instance, in the Paris manuscript, Nieuhof gives quite a long description of porcelain in Jingdezhen:

And because even today people still do not know how the material for this strange and peerless earthenware actually is produced, I shall recount what we found out about it. In the province of Nanking there is a town named Coesiffuu, where alluvial clay from the mountains is excavated and moulded into square blocks, each of them weighing 3 catties, which are usually sold for a *kondrijn* to certain people who transport them to the city of Sinctesinno, where it is prepared and fired in the following way: they fire their kiln for fifteen days and seal the door to exclude all air, and after another fifteen days the kiln is burnt out and opened in the presence of a person in charge [of the kiln], who checks it properly and takes the fifth piece of any type on behalf of the emperor. Afterwards they sell the rest of the porcelain to people from Ucienjen, from where it is distributed in all directions. And although the clay comes from Nanking province, people there do not know how to produce porcelain as skilfully as is done here; where it is designed so ingeniously and painted with indigo in such a way that the effect could not give greater pleasure. It is a specialized knowledge, which these people only hand down from generation to generation. (En overmits men tot noch toe niet eigenlijk heeft geweeten hoe de materie tot dit rare en weergadelooze eerdwerk geprepareerd zwerd, zoo zalle ik hier verhalen wat onz daarvan is voorgekomen. In de provintie Nankin leit een stad genoemd

Goesiffuu, hier word de eerde tusschen 't gedrang der bergen uitgegraven en gevormt in vierkante stucken die ijder omtrent drie katti wegen en worden gemeenlik voor kondrijn verkocht aan zoodane luiden die diezelve van daar vervoeren na de voornoemde stad Sinctesinno, alwaar 'tzelve bereid en aldus gebacken werdt: Zij gloeyen haar ovens 15 dagen zoo dicht datter geen lucht kan inkomen en na 't verloop van noch zooveel dagen word het forneis geopend in presentie van een vevelhebber, die 'tzelve visiteert en van elke sorte het 5^{de} stuck voor de keyzer neemt. Daarna verkopen zij 'tzelve aan die van Ucienjen, van waar 't overall vervoerd werd. En alhoewell de klay in de provintie Nankin gegraven werd, zoo weten zij diezelve doch zoo kunstig niet te verarbeiden als hier, daar 't zoo geestig werd opgezet en beschilderd met indigo, dat het oog niet aangener zien kan. Een zonderlinge wetenschap, die deze luiden an niemand als an haar geslachte voortleeren.)¹⁶⁹

It is very impressive that Nieuhof could get knowledge of the production of Chinese Jingdezhen porcelain, as he especially notes that the technique for producing Jingdezhen porcelain could only be handed down within the family and not to any other people. He may have heard about it from the Chinese interpreter or simply read about it in Martini's notes. With respect to the interpreter, the VOC directors' commission letter gave thoughtful instructions that when the embassy arrived in Canton they should find some able interpreters but that they needed to be careful about the

¹⁶⁹ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 41.

interpreters' loyalty and keep secrets from them.¹⁷⁰ Meanwhile, the ambassadors had also brought Martini's book with them, also at the directors' suggestion. The Dutch visitors must have enjoyed comparing their own observations with those of Martini's record, such as the description of the cormorant.¹⁷¹

In all, these secondary sources suggest that Nieuhof had some knowledge of China before he got there, and when he combined this with his eyewitness descriptions, the reader got the impression that he was growing familiar with China and that Nieuhof's account was reliable. As Nieuhof's account often provides objective if fairly general description about the geography and historical background of Chinese cities or towns, its accuracy can be examined through comparisons with Chinese chorography as reflected in the local gazetteers or *Difangzhi* (地方志), which have a tradition going back centuries.¹⁷² Discussing the city of Ganzhou (赣州), Nieuhof writes,

On 15 April, Their Honours [the ambassadors] stopped to spend the night at Kancheu [Ganzhou], which is one of the most famous cities in China. It is situated 150 li away from Nankan and is built in a form of square close to the bank of the River Kiam. One can see four large gates over here, named after the

¹⁷⁰ The directors of the VOC in Batavia commissioned two interpreters, the best they could find in Batavia, to go with the Dutch envoy to Canton, but they also suggested the ambassadors find some better Chinese interpreters in Canton. See VOC 879. "Bataviaes Uitgaand Briefboek," 1655, instruction, fol.392.

¹⁷¹ See VOC 1220, fol. 426.

¹⁷² For Prof. Blussé's seminar on Nieuhof's trip to Peking in 1986, Alice de Jong and Anne Sietske Keizer, with the help of Prof. Chiang Shu-sheng, made an extensive study of the chorography of Chinese cities and towns that the Dutch embassy passed by in 1655–57. My comparison of the gazetteers and the Paris manuscript owes much to their work.

four directions of the wind and built in an ancient manner. We were lying in front of Simon or the Western Gate, on which one can climb a stone staircase and pass under two gates to enter into the city. (Den 15^e ditto namen Haar E.^s nachtrust voor Kancheu, zijnde ene der befaamste steden in Chijna. Zij leid 150 lij van Nankan, in een vierkante vorm, dicht an den oever van de reviere Kiam. Men ziet hier 4 groote poorten, die na de 4 winden der wereld genoemd en antijx zij opgeboudt. Wij lagen voor Simon off de Westpoort, alwaar men met een stene trap omhoog door twe bogen in de stadt gaat).¹⁷³

According to this description, the city was laid out in a square and had four gates named for the four cardinal directions. According to the Chinese chorography of Ganzhou, there were thirteen gates only five of which were in use in the sixteenth century.¹⁷⁴ In 1646, the third year of Ming Shunzhi's reign, three gates had been destroyed and two of them were restored in 1655 (the twelfth year of Shunzhi's reign), one year before the Dutch embassy group's arrival in this town.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, it is true that when Nieuhof was there, only four gates were in use. But it is noteworthy that these four gates are not simply named after the direction: the east gate is named *Baisheng* (百胜, a hundred victories), south gate *Zhennan* (镇南, to quell the South), west gate *Xijin* (西津, the ferry at the West) and the north east gate *Jianchun* (建春, the coming spring). As shown in the Chinese map (fig. 2.1), the west gate through which the Dutch embassy passed was a double-gate (the text

¹⁷³ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 38.

¹⁷⁴ See “*The Gazetteer of Ganxian Prefecture (赣县志)*” in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu (中国方志丛书)*, ed. Depu Huang (黄德溥) (Taipei: Chengwen Publishing House, 1975), 273–75.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

says that the Dutch entered through the west gate which has “two arches”). And although the town is encircled by walls, it is not actually a square, and the four gates do not represent the four cardinal directions.

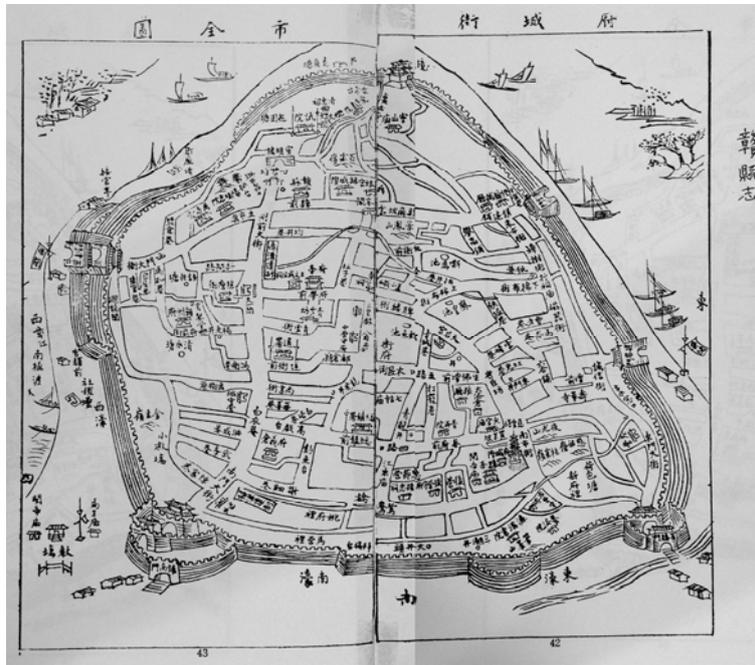


Figure 2.1. Map of the town of Ganzhou from *The Gazetteer of Ganxian Prefecture*.

Thus, the sense of familiarity Nieuwhof conveys in his text does not necessarily mean that his description of China in the Paris manuscript is absolutely accurate. The description of the town of Ji’an (吉安) offers another good example: “In the middle of the river, directly in front of the city, is situated an island on which stands a beautiful pagoda, which is newly built and surrounded by a high wall. (In ‘t midden van de riviere

recht tegenover de stad licht een eyland daar een schooner pagoda op staat, die eerst nieuw getimmerd en met een hoge muur becingeld is.)”¹⁷⁶

The island and “pagoda” can also be found in the chorography of the town of Ji’an,¹⁷⁷ according to which the island is actually named Bailuzhou (白露洲) and the building is not a pagoda, but the well-known Egret Island College (白鹭书院) founded in the Song and Ming dynasties. Therefore, in this case, Nieuhof mistook the college, which he saw from a distance, for a pagoda. This is understandable because although Nieuhof spent two years travelling in China with the assistance of Chinese interpreters, it was not possible for him to completely understand Chinese culture, custom and so forth. So his account is inevitably limited by his perspective and knowledge of China.

Conclusion

Nieuhof’s account in the Paris manuscript records the Dutch embassy’s experience in China and shows that he was emotionally involved in his description of China. The similarities with the official report also suggest that Nieuhof’s account is based on his own observation. Moreover, comparing the text in the first Dutch edition, the text in the Paris manuscript, and the official report of the ambassador, it is clear that the text of the printed edition about the Dutch envoy’s journey was based on Nieuhof’s account and not on the official account in the VOC archive. Although the account in the published book is more detailed, it shares the same story as the account in the Paris manuscript. This suggests that Nieuhof made many notes recording his experiences and describing various aspects of Chinese

¹⁷⁶ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhoofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 39.

¹⁷⁷ See “*The Gazetteer of Ji’an Prefecture (吉安府志)*” in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu (中国方志丛书)*, ed. Depu Huang (黄德溥) (Taipei: Chengwen Publishing House, 1975), vol. 19, School.

life, including its cities, towns, people, costumes, and customs, but that when he produced the Paris manuscript he selected only those he thought important and interesting to his reader. His brother Hendrik Nieuhof and the publisher Jacob van Meurs drew on these notes for the published book. As far as the drawings in the Paris manuscript are concerned, Nieuhof selected only those sketches that he thought crucial. This may also explain why occasionally the content of the accompanying text in the Paris manuscript does not correspond that well with the drawings.

Chapter 3 The Drawings in the Paris Manuscript

3.1 The drawings in the Paris manuscript

The drawings in the manuscript have a wide range of themes. They include sixty-three drawings of Chinese cityscapes, townscapes, and other landscape views, four drawings of Chinese architecture, five drawings of Chinese costumes and customs, three drawings of historical events, three drawings of Chinese boats, and one drawing of a cormorant, one drawing of a cotton tree, and one plan of the Forbidden City. Table 3.1 categorizes the subject of each individual drawing and Chart 3.1 shows each group's share of the total images.

Table 3.1 title of table

Theme	Number	Folios on which they appear
Cityscapes, townscapes, and landscapes	63	7, 9, 27, 29, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 46, 49, 52, 55, 57, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 67, 69, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 81, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 99, 105, 108, 112, 113, 117, 118, 120, 122, 127, 130, 132, 137, 138, 141, 142, 144, 147, 149, 151, 153, 155, 161, 163, 167, 199, 227, 229
Architecture	4	21, 91, 95, 128
Plants and animals	2	124 (bird), 139 (cotton tree)
Boats	3	109, 110, 209
Plans	1	189 (the Forbidden City)

Theme	Number	Folios on which they appear
Historical events	3	13, 169, 185
Costumes and customs	5	18, 23, 101, 103, 134

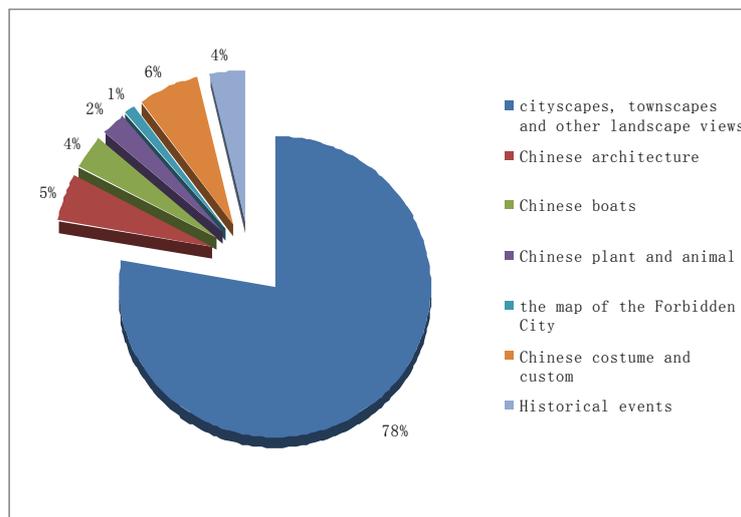


Chart 3.1 Proportion of each theme of drawings in the manuscript.

Cityscapes, townscapes, and other landscape views constitute more than three-quarters of the images, which is not surprising in view of the desire of the VOC to obtain visual knowledge of Chinese towns and cities. The drawings of architecture, man-made hills, boats, and costumes and customs take a smaller proportion, but they provide the reader a more elaborate impression of China.

Seventeenth-century Dutch travelogues typically were illustrated in order to offer the reader a visual representation of the accompanying text. However, the drawings in the Paris manuscript do not really fulfil this

purpose because the drawings do not include inscriptions or captions indicating precisely what they illustrate. This is a particularly serious problem in the case of cityscapes and landscapes, because not every Chinese city, town or village mentioned in the text has a corresponding drawing. Without specific inscriptions, it is not easy to identify which drawing matches the particular place in the text. Further difficulties arise when trying to determine which of two or three consecutively placed townscapes illustrate the cities and towns being discussed in the text, especially when neither the text nor the drawings refer to any obvious landmarks.¹⁷⁸ Accordingly, the reader has to match the drawings and the text by guesswork.

Nevertheless, this does not mean the content of these drawings cannot be identified at all. On the one hand, a number of drawings may be identified by reference to the descriptions in the text. On the other hand, because there is a high possibility that both the drawings in the manuscript and the engravings in the printed book follow the original travel account and sketches made by Nieuhof on the spot and share the same theme and design, the identity of the drawings in the Paris manuscript can almost always be traced through the inscriptions on the corresponding engravings from the printed book. Of course, this assumes that the inscriptions in the engravings are the same as the original titles recorded by Nieuhof on the sketches (if we

¹⁷⁸ For instance, four drawings are depicted in succession, fols. 84, 85, 86, and 87. It is very common for two drawings to have been drawn consecutively, including fols. 34 and 35, 66 and 67, 80 and 81, 108 and 109, 112 and 113, 117 and 118, 127 and 128, 137 and 138, and 141 and 142. In these cases, there are always several cities, towns, and villages mentioned in the text before or after the drawings, so it is hard to distinguish which drawing illustrates which site.

suppose he ever did do so) and have not been arbitrarily rewritten or invented by the engravers or the publisher.¹⁷⁹

A reconstruction of the situation might run like this: Nieuhof marked the original sketches with captions during the journey, but when he reproduced the manuscript drawings, for some unknown reason, the inscriptions were omitted. Nevertheless, in the process of producing the engravings, the inscriptions were restored on the basis of the original sketches. If this is the case, the details in these drawings would have been lost on their primary audience, namely, the directors of the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC, until seven years later when the book was published. Leaving these considerations aside, in this dissertation the verification of the drawings relies mainly on the description in the text and, more important, on the inscriptions in the corresponding engravings.

The mechanics of reproducing the drawings in the Paris manuscript has been discussed by Falkenburg.¹⁸⁰ Generally speaking, the procedure can be traced in four stages: first, a rough design is depicted in black chalk and pencil; next, the structure and chalk-and-pencil contours are retraced and elaborated in pen and sepia ink; then a light watercolour wash is applied to create contrasts of light and shadow over some specific design elements; and finally, landscape details and staffage and a frame for the whole image are drawn in sepia ink.¹⁸¹ This process was followed particularly in landscape scenes.

¹⁷⁹ In the French edition in 1666, the inscriptions on the prints are not the same as the titles in the Dutch edition. Zhuang Guotu has also attempted to identify these drawings in *A Study of the First Dutch Embassy Visit to China*. The engravings in the first Dutch edition in 1665 were not available to Zhuang Guotu, and he inferred the identity of most cities and towns on the basis of the route travelled. But because not every place mentioned in the text has an accompanying drawing, any definition in this manner is subjective and does not reflect seventeenth-century reader's cognition.

¹⁸⁰ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 69.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

The drawing on folio 46 representing the town of Nan'an (南安, fig. 3.1), offers a good example of such a four-step procedure. It is easy to see that the rough contours of the mountains, riverbank, and bridge in the background are first drawn in pencil and chalk; the position of a dilapidated section of city wall on the left corner and a row of dwelling houses standing on the right riverbank are also plotted out by pencil and chalk sketches. Following this, it can be recognized that pen and ink has been used to refine and elaborate the mountains, the bridge, the houses on the riverbank, the city wall, and the city tower on the left, in order to render a clear contour for these objects. Watercolour was then added on the darker side of mountains, the houses, and the city wall to create a three-dimensional effect. The framework was first drawn in pencil, as can be seen in the lower right corner, and was repeated in sepia ink. It is interesting to note that the framework appears to have been drawn after the drawing was delineated, as the frame runs through the city wall and mountains on the left.



Figure 3.1. Drawing folio 46 in the Paris manuscript.

At first glance the resulting cityscape conveys a sense of naturalness, of a city located at the foot of continuous rolling mountains and next to a broad river. On closer inspection, however, details of the city wall and houses in the foreground and the bridge in the background give a different impression. First of all, it is very strange that a dilapidated section of city wall stands alone in the river in the left foreground, and the ground on which it stands is much higher than the ground across the river. Its positional relationship with the other section of the city wall and its function—to protect the inner city—are not clear in this drawing.¹⁸² If we look at the earliest depiction of this city wall, that is, if we go back to the first phase and ignore all the ink and watercolor additions, we find that the preliminary depiction of this dilapidated section of city wall in pencil and chalk is mainly a line marking the bottom of the roof of the watchtower on the city wall. This suggests that Nieuhof may not have intended to depict a dilapidated riverside section of the city in the first place. Keeping this in mind, a closer look at the city wall in the background may offer more clues. This wall starts from the point where the city wall in the foreground ends and extends to the right. Then another very strange detail appears: the city wall is connected to a bridge and on top of which many buildings appear to be situated. According to this exotic arrangement, it could be inferred that buildings were actually built over the bridge. But did this happen in this cityscape?

To answer this question, again it is necessary to review the different working phases. If we remove the depiction in pen and the watercolour which actually offers an impression of naturalism, one finds that the bridge

¹⁸² Even if this broken wall is intended to reflect the ruins after the war, the wall would not likely have appeared in the middle of the water.

was initially depicted in pencil, and this pencil line is actually an extension of the line depicting the left side of the city wall. The pairs of lines that are supposed to be the piers of the bridge are too rough to be identified with certainty but they may be regarded as part of a buttress or turret. That is to say, if we deconstruct the working phases and concentrate only on the preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk, we find that Nieuhof probably planned simply to depict a city wall traversing the picture horizontally. The city wall in the left foreground should be connected to the city wall in the background; and the “bridge” should be taken as a section of city wall. In this way, the strange position of the city wall in the foreground and the buildings above the bridge makes sense. And if this is correct, the dwelling houses on the right side do not need to be so extraordinary tall to keep balance of the composition. Therefore, if we imagine this cityscape in terms of the depiction in pencil and chalk, we get a very simple cityscape with a broad river in the foreground, the city and the city wall in the middle distance, and the mountains in the background. This is apparently not the same picture as we see in this cityscape after the refinement in pen and watercolour.

This example indicates at least two points. First of all, the production of the Paris manuscript is not based on a well-executed original source. In other words, this suggests that the more than 150 *na het leven* sketches mentioned by Hendrik Nieuhof in his preface are, in fact, very rough silhouette-sketches. If his brother had provided detailed and complete sketches, the contradictory depictions should not exist. A drawing from the manuscript preserved in the Zeeuws Museum in Middelburg (fig. 3.2), may

shed some light on this theory.¹⁸³ As noted in the Introduction, this manuscript is a copy of the Paris edition made in 1850. In this example, the pencil marks depicting the profile of the mountains, cliff, and architecture are also discernable; but unlike its prototype, the preliminary depictions in pencil are fluid and certain and have not been changed by the later depiction in pen and watercolour. Moreover, the pen strokes are more certain and much clearer and show a clear and plain scene of the town of Nan'an. Apparently, the draftsman who made this copy had no hesitation and no need to reconstruct the composition. He just made a nice picture from the somewhat uncertain details in the Paris original.



Figure 3.2. Drawing in the Middelburg manuscript, Zeeuws Museum, Middleburg, G3618.

¹⁸³ The copy in Zeeuws Museum is based on the Paris manuscript, but we still have no clue how E. J. W. Koch got access to this manuscript. Apparently, his work reflects better artistic training than Nieuhof had, even though he made copies from the latter's brief report. The manuscript number is Ms 386.

Second, the above example indicates that the depictions in pencil and chalk and the depictions in pen and watercolour have different intentions regarding the design of the cityscape of China. That is to say, in the absence of elaborate original sketches, Nieuhof needed to recompose the images of China when he produced the Paris manuscript. And the coarse and uncertain brush strokes suggest that Nieuhof was not a professional draftsman and his drawings seem not to be based entirely on direct observation. This point becomes much clearer when we compare Nieuhof's drawings with those made by a contemporary draftsman, Pieter van Doornik, whose experiences in China were quite similar to Nieuhof's.

3.2 A comparison with the drawings made by Pieter van Doornik

After the conquest of Taiwan by Zheng Chenggong, Governor-General Johan Maetsuyker and the Council in Batavia, decided to send a third embassy from Taiwan to China from 1666 to 1668.¹⁸⁴ Probably disappointed with Nieuhof's very rough drawings, they decided to commission a more professional draftsman, Pieter van Doornik, to make drawings of China. The ambassador of this embassy, Pieter van Hoorn, and his suite left Foochow (Fuzhou, 福州) on 21 January 1667, arrived in Peking on 20 June and returned to Batavia on 9 January 1668.¹⁸⁵ Although again, the VOC did not derive any direct advantage from this embassy, it did bring more information about China to Europe.¹⁸⁶ In 1670, Jacob van Meurs published *Gedenkwaardig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye op de kuste en in het Keizerrijk van Taising of Sina*, a work

¹⁸⁴ For the details of this embassy visit to China, see John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to Kang-hsi, 1666–1687* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984).

¹⁸⁵ Constantijn Nobel accompanied him as the first counsellor of embassy and chief merchant.

¹⁸⁶ Again, the feedback the embassy got in Peking was to "send an embassy once in every eight years and to trade every two years." For more information on this visit, see Wills, *Embassies and Illusions*.

by Olfert Dapper that contained much material from Jesuit and other non-Dutch sources and a number of illustrations based on Pieter van Doornik's drawings of China. Although Dapper had never set foot on Asia, his book has been regarded as one of "the most comprehensive descriptions of China published in the Netherlands" and "virtually an encyclopaedia of things Chinese."¹⁸⁷

Twenty-two extant drawings by Pieter van Doornik are now preserved in the Atlas van Stolk collection of the Historical Museum of the city of Rotterdam.¹⁸⁸ One of them bears his signature. These drawings are not of uniform size, and some of them have been folded. They are mainly drawn in dark brown ink and occasionally with preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk. It is not clear whether these drawings were produced by Van Doornik on site or when he returned to Holland.

Unlike the Paris manuscript, these drawings are depicted on loose pages and there is no accompanying text describing their content. But it is noteworthy that most of these twenty-two drawings have been given captions, which often appear beneath the frame. For instance, Van Doornik's title for drawing Number 17 (fig. 3.3) is "T Inrijden van den ambassadr. In de keijserlijke hoofstadt Peckin" (The entry of the ambassador into the royal capital city Peking). As the title indicates, this drawing represents the occasion of the Dutch embassy's arrival in Peking and its welcome by Chinese officials outside of the city gate. Moreover, to

¹⁸⁷ See Lach and Van Kley, *Trade, Missions, Literature*, 490. It is centred on accounts of the Dutch East India Company's expeditions under Balthasar Bort to the coast of Fujian province in 1663 and 1664 and its embassy under Peter van Hoorn to Peking in 1666–68. Moreover, Dapper added a mass of further information on China gathered from Jesuit and other sources.

¹⁸⁸ The collection number is 2355. See Gerrit van Rijn, C. van Ommeren, and A. van Stolk. Cz. *Atlas van Stolk: Katalogus der Historie, Spot en Zinneprenten Betrekkelijk de Geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Prederik Muller, 1897), 42–43.

give the audience a better understanding of the scene, he adds a key identifying the figures and other objects in the drawing:

1. Den ambassadeur (the ambassador)
2. een *Sepou* [Chinese title, 司务] of Rijxraat die ons ½ uur buyten de stadt verwillecomde (a *sepou* or state councillor who came to welcome us half an hour distant from the city)
3. onse suite te paart (our retinue on horseback)
4. de karren met schenkagie goederen (carriages with the presents)
5. vier Persiaans schenkagie Paerden (four Persian horses to be presented as gifts [to the Emperor])
6. de stadt Peckin (the city of Peking)



Figure 3.3. Pieter van Doornik, “The entry of the ambassador into the royal capital city Peking,” Atlas van Stolk, 2355.

These captions correspond to numbers marked on or next to the figures and other items in the drawing. Number 1, the Dutch ambassador, identifies the man who wears a western costume and stands in front of a sedan chair meeting a man wearing a Chinese robe with bow. Number 5 can be seen by the two carriages on the left side of the picture. These captions make an interpretation of this drawing much easier and the audience can therefore follow the story: the Dutch ambassador and his suite riding on horses and carrying their presents to the Chinese emperor and his officials are about to enter the city of Peking, while Chinese officials standing outside the city gate; in the background we can see a pagoda, the city wall, and the gate of Peking, which is marked by the number 6 in brown ink. Therefore, although there is no accompanying text describing this event, the reader can still comprehend the drawing and even witness this historical occasion from the captions marked in this drawing.



Figure 3.4. Drawing folio 169 in the Paris Manuscript.

However, similar information cannot be gleaned from Nieuhof's drawing in the Paris manuscript (fig. 3.4), which is supposed to represent a similar historical event, namely the Dutch embassy's entry into Peking. Like all other drawings in the Paris manuscript, this has no caption. But unlike the others, this is not difficult to interpret because the accompanying text next to this drawing describes the parade of the Dutch envoy, the magnificent city wall, and so forth. Nevertheless, without captions, the reader cannot tell the exact identity of the figures or the background.

Moreover, the different ways in which Van Doornik and Nieuhof portray these similar occasions also reflects their very different levels of artistic training and skill. First of all, Van Doornik uses a more orderly composition to present this occasion. Most of the picture is taken up by the parade of the Dutch embassy, the carriages, and gifts, with a few Chinese figures riding or walking towards the city gate of Peking. The official welcome ceremony happens on the right side of the picture where the ambassador and a Chinese official meet each other with bows. The city of Peking, represented by a magnificent city gate, city wall, a tall pagoda, some Chinese roofs, and so on, appears in a reasonable order. With such an arrangement, the reader can easily follow the Dutch embassy group to meet Chinese officials and enter into the city Peking.

In Nieuhof's drawing, the meeting also happens outside the city gate. But here, the composition is rather cramped and messy, and the distinction between the foreground and the background is not very clear. From the right bottom of the drawing, a road curves dramatically and sweeps up to the city gate in front of which are the mounted ambassadors. Beyond them the city gate and city wall traverse the whole background. Therefore, although it presents this historical occasion, it does not render the proper sense of space

as everything is bunched up. Nieuhof's compositional arrangement in this drawing shows that he is not good at arranging and representing such a grand occasion.

His artistic limitations are also reflected in his representation of figures and architecture. Regarding the figures, the Dutch embassy group has been very carefully depicted in a Western manner with three-dimensional effect; we can easily make out the two trumpeters in the front and the two men facing the city gate and waving their standards. However, a great number of people standing between the embassy group and the city gate have only been roughly sketched with their heads so as to give an effect of the crowded condition.

The depiction of Chinese architecture, specifically the city wall and city gate, also suggests that Nieuhof was not as well trained in art as Van Doornik. In the latter's drawing, although the wall and gate take up only a small part of the picture, the structure of these buildings is reasonable and convincing. Nieuhof's city wall is so roughly depicted that many details cannot stand up to careful scrutiny. For instance, the façade of the gate-tower on the left is observed from the front, yet the shade on the inner wall of the city gate and the additional fortified battlements attached to the wall indicate the gate is observed from the right. Therefore, rather than being an integrated architectural structure, the city gate and the gate tower above it seem to have been artificially joined. Similarly, it is difficult to tell the identity of the buildings standing on the right of the city wall, as their shape is too weird and their size too large for us to judge whether they are part of the city wall or standing next to it.

The representation of the fortified battlement seems to capture the essential shape and features of a traditional Chinese bastion, but closer

inspection reveals many problems. This type of bastion is usually called *ma-mian* (马面), literally “horse’s face.” It curved around the outer city wall at intervals, ensuring no access to the interior of the city. Normally, such structures were placed at intervals of eighty or ninety metres; they were as high as the city wall, with one side attached to the wall and the other three sides protruding to reinforce and protect it.¹⁸⁹ The distance between them was intended to equal the range of ancient weapons such as stones and arrows fired in either direction, so as to cover the whole city wall between each two *ma-mians* (as shown in figure 3.5, the ancient city of Pingyao 平遥).¹⁹⁰ But the *ma-mians* in Nieuhof’s drawing are too close to each other, and the watchtower which is supposed to appear on top of each *ma-mian* is also missing. These strange components of the city wall seem to be too randomly placed for a plausible effect. Although Van Doornik makes no attempt to show *ma-mian*, he achieves a greater sense of order, and by whatever criteria, a comparison of these drawings suggests that Nieuhof was not as technically accomplished as Van Doornik.

¹⁸⁹ See Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 7; Yinong Xu, *The Chinese City in Space and Time: The Development of Urban Form in Suzhou* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 114.

¹⁹⁰ More information on the *ma-mian* in Pingyao, see Shen Weichen, *The Ancient City of Pingyao* (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2003); Ronald G. Knapp, *China’s Walled Cities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 91.



Figure 3.5. Photograph of “Ma-mian” on the city wall of the city Pingyao, Shanxi Province.

Compared to Nieuhof’s, Van Doornik’s brushstrokes are clearer and more certain, which reflects a trained draftsman’s sense of confidence. The marks of pencil can be occasionally seen in the preliminary depictions of mountain, bridge, and so on, but the later refinement in pen and watercolour confirm rather than depart from the preliminary depictions. Van Doornik also depicts most elements in his drawings directly in pen and he was very good at using watercolour to display the shadow effects.

Therefore, Van Doornik’s drawings of Chinese cityscapes show viewers the kind of drawings one expects of a professional draftsman, despite the fact that most of his landscapes represent different Chinese cities and towns because the third Dutch embassy took a different route to Peking.¹⁹¹ Moreover, Van Doornik followed Dutch seventeenth century pictorial convention to compose the landscapes of China. The foreground is

¹⁹¹ The first Dutch embassy went to Peking from Canton, and the third Dutch embassy departed from the capital city Fuzhou, Fujian province.

usually artificially filled with rocks or dunes in dark shadow; the city or town often appears in the middle ground, and occasionally, the mountains show up in the background. He often managed to observe Chinese cities and towns from an elevated position and this enabled him to draw a panoramic view as well as construction details of individual structures, as in the cityscape shown in figure 3.6. In Nieuhof's drawings, the Chinese city is always observed from the water and the reader can only see its exterior, which usually consists of a city wall, city gate and tower, pagoda, and so on. I will discuss his representation of Chinese cityscapes in greater detail in a later chapter.



Figure 3.6. Pieter van Doornik, “Aldus Vertoont sich de stadt Hocksiou op de bergh. A., 1666–1668,” Atlas van Stolk, 2355.

Conclusion

These differences suggest that with respect to the representation of Chinese city- and landscapes, Van Doornik was a better draftsman than Nieuhof at that stage of his “career.” But Van Doornik was not as good at showing Chinese interiors, and he applies the same interior arrangement to

represent different historical occasions and does so with any visual perspective.¹⁹² Moreover, in respect to the representation of Chinese officials, idol statues, boats, and other subjects, Nieuhof's drawings convey more reliable impressions, which I will discuss in detail in a later chapter. And Nieuhof apparently made a greater effort to provide a comprehensive record of what he saw in China, executing eighty-one drawings, nearly four times as many as Van Doornik. Although these drawings are not as neat as those made by van Doornik, they look lively and contain more information.

The comparison between the drawings of Nieuhof and Van Doornik, who had similar experiences two or three decades apart, is very significant for the investigation of Nieuhof's drawings of China. It not only shows people what kind of drawings of China could be made by a rather skilled draftsman, but also reveals that Nieuhof was not a professional artist or draftsman. This needs some qualification, for despite his lack of formal training, as the years passed, Nieuhof may have become a much better draftsman, witness the illustrations in his later published *Voyages and Travels to the East Indies*.

As we have also seen in his biography, Nieuhof spent his earlier career in Brazil serving under his uncle Picard and after his voyage to China he continued his career in the service of the VOC as an adventurous merchant who enjoyed making drawings of whatever he ran across. When studying or investigating Nieuhof's drawings, we should not treat him as a professional artist or draftsman but as a gifted amateur who increasingly refined his skills. The questions are: How did he produce his drawings of China and to what extent did he follow Dutch pictorial conventions of his time? With these

¹⁹² There are several drawings showing the banquet and other activities held indoors, and van Doornik arranged them in the same pattern, such as picture No. 6 and No. 8. See Rijn and Ommeren, *Katalogus der Historie, Spot en Zinneprenten betrekkelijk de Geschiedenis van Nederland*, 42–43.

questions in mind, the investigation of Nieuhof's drawings may shed some light on such issues as the kinds of images he made of China, and the extent to which his drawings were made from life, albeit within the limitations of his artistic ability.

Chapter 4 The Representation of China Based on the Direct Observation

4.1 An interpretation of the term “na het leven” according to the pictorial conventions of the seventeenth century

Before we investigate how Nieuhof produced his “Chinese” drawings, it is necessary to consider the artistic conventions and principles he followed. Because Nieuhof claimed that his drawings or sketches of China were produced from life, a claim used by his brother Hendrik and the publisher Van Meurs as a unique selling point for *Het Gezantschap*, we first should consider the concept of “na het leven” within the context of the Dutch pictorial conventions in the seventeenth century.

The term “na het leven” was first used in the important treatise on the art of painting, *Het Schilderboeck* (Book on picturing) which was published in Haarlem in 1604. Its author, Karel van Mander (1548–1606), offered “the first fully formed theory of Netherlandish painting, drawing, and printmaking.”¹⁹³ This treatise discusses many important issues including the landscape as a subject for artists.¹⁹⁴ Van Mander argues that young artists should go into the countryside to study and extract the essence of nature and to record it in drawings that they can subsequently translate into paint upon their return to the studio. He does not advise artists to represent the landscape just as they see it; the aim of the landscape images is rather to

¹⁹³ Chris Murray, *Key Writers on Art* (London: Routledge, 2003), 77.

¹⁹⁴ On the discussion of Van Mander’s theory of art, see Wolfgang Stechow, *Northern Renaissance Art 1400–1600: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 57–67; also see Walter S. Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander’s Schieder-boeck* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 12, 97–98. Also see Murray, *Key Writers on Art*, 77–80.

create the illusion of verisimilitude.¹⁹⁵ Therefore, two points need to be addressed here: the idea that the representation of landscapes should be rooted in the study of reality; and the notion that the artist should aim to render nature as it is shown in the eyes of the observer.

In respect to the modern study of Van Mander's theory, David Adrian Freedberg claims that "the phrase *naer het leven* implies that the work gives the impression of being lifelike and that natural phenomena are depicted as drawn from life."¹⁹⁶ When the twentieth-century concept of "photographic realism" was projected back on Dutch painting of the seventeenth century, it was believed that the old masters had portrayed the visible world as if they had seen it through a camera lens.¹⁹⁷ Svetlana Alpers has argued that in the seventeenth century the Dutch paintings were considered a replacement of the eyes; the painter supposedly suppressed his personality when depicting nature, thereby allowing for its objective representation.¹⁹⁸ But according to Freedberg, a Dutch landscape painting did not have to represent accurate views, but to provide plausible, harmonious and agreeable scenes.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, in traditional landscape painting, nature has been reformed by the Dutch painters' imagination, either by "conjuring up lunar remoteness as in Hercules Segers's fantasy landscapes or simply by rerouting a river or

¹⁹⁵ Kristina Hartzler Nguyen, *The Made Landscape: City and Country in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Prints* (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 1992), 9.

¹⁹⁶ David Adrian Freedberg, *Dutch Landscape Prints of the Seventeenth Century* (London: British Museum Publications, 1980), 11.

¹⁹⁷ On realism in seventeenth-century Dutch painting, see Edwin Buijsen, "Tussen Fantasie en Werkelijkheid: 17de Eeuwse Hollandse Landschapschilderkunst" (The Hague: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 1993), 45–52. Also see Bernard S. Myers and Trewin Copplestone, *The History of Art: Architecture, Painting, Sculpture*, (Feltham: Viscount, 1985), 696.

¹⁹⁸ Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (London: John Murray, 1983), 40.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

relocating a church spire as in the background of a country scene by Jan van Goyen or Salomon van Ruysdael.”²⁰⁰

In a catalogue of seventeenth-century landscape painting, Bob Haak claims that the realism in Dutch painting of the Golden Age is relative.²⁰¹ He argues that even though domestic scenes give the impression of having been drawn directly from daily life, the domestic iconography holds a deeper, moralizing meaning. Edwin Buijsen, on the other hand, studies landscapes through an investigation of fantasy and reality in seventeenth-century Dutch pictures. On the basis of Van Mander’s practical suggestions, he argues that it is clear that a good landscape painting must be carefully composed from elements derived from reality and executed with some degree of naturalness, but that the final result must more than surpass reality. Transcending nature was the artist’s greatest objective.²⁰² The disparate elements may not have been discovered in one single location, and some of them may be recognized as certain well-known landmarks from altogether different places.²⁰³ The phrase *keurlijke natuerlijckheyt* (selective naturalism) proposed by Samuel van Hoogstraten probably explains the effect of editing and reforming nature. In his discussion of landscape, this painter gives the following opinion: “Every day we see a thousand unusual and pretty things in the pleasant part of Nature; but one should always turn one’s regard to the most beautiful; and if I had my own way I would turn quite a number of landscape painters away from the all too common and bad

²⁰⁰ Peter C. Sutton and Albert Blankert, *Masters of 17th-century Dutch Landscape Painting* (London: Herbert, 1987), 1.

²⁰¹ Buijsen, “Tussen Fantasie en Werkelijkheid: 17de Eeuwse Hollandse Landschapschilderkunst,” 47–48.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁰³ Freedberg, *Dutch Landscape Prints of the Seventeenth Century*, 10.

choices they make.”²⁰⁴ That is to say, nature should not be represented as it is, but rather, the most beautiful aspects should be selected. In other words, the essence of seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painting is that the elements are selected from reality and composed on the basis of “judgement” (*oordeel*) into “a harmonious and natural-looking entity.” Here, “judgement” means nothing less than interpreting and improving what the painter observes.²⁰⁵ For instance, Pieter Brueghel the Elder crossed the Alps during his visit to Italy in 1550–52 and made many drawings from life. After having returned to his homeland, he assimilated and combined the elements taken from reality and other elements from his own imagination. In so doing, he gave a decisive impetus to the Flemish landscape painting. Many Dutch landscape painters followed this style, Aelbert Cuyp among them. He had travelled up the Rhine as far as Nijmegen and Cleves around 1651–52 and recorded various sights in a sketchbook. Later he used a number of his drawings as working material for his paintings, in which topographical accuracy is usually subordinated to the serene atmosphere of the landscape. Therefore, Buijsen concludes that the majority of Dutch landscape painters composed their paintings “from the imagination” (*uyt den gheest*) after “drawing from life” (*couterfeyten naer het leven*) in the open air.

Therefore, there are primarily two essential characteristics of the seventeenth-century interpretation of “from life” in the common sense: first, the depictions have to be made on the basis of direct observation; and second, the artists can add imaginary elements or select and compose the elements for a “harmonious and natural-looking entity.” In fact, these two

²⁰⁴ Cited in Freedberg, *Dutch Landscape Prints of the Seventeenth Century*, 10.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

characteristics invite us to study the drawings in Nieuhof's Paris manuscript and the engravings in the printed book, and to investigate how they were produced with the aim of following the convention of "na het leven".

Let us now see how these two characteristics are reflected in the preliminary composition in pencil and chalk, and the later refinement in pen and watercolour of the Paris manuscript. As Nieuhof was not a professional or very skilful draftsman, he probably first copied the design from the original sketches he had made on the spot in pencil and chalk, but as discussed above these original sketches were very rough and he needed to further refine them with pen and ink and watercolour. This may well be the reason why depictions in pen sometimes have different intentions from the depictions in pencil and chalk. If this is the case, the drawings with obvious and detailed depictions in pencil and chalk could be based on direct observation, because they follow closely the sketches made by Nieuhof on site. In this sense, they should represent direct observations and therefore offer a trustworthy representation of China. In the following section, I examine this assumption by selecting some drawings with obvious and detailed depictions in pencil and chalk and then check their specificity and credibility.

4.2 The representation of China based on direct observation

Obvious and detailed depictions in pencil and chalk are often discernable in drawings that focus on Chinese people, historical events, architecture, boats, and so forth. Therefore, to examine whether the depictions in pencil and chalk are based on direct observation and represent reliable image of China, it is necessary to start with these drawings. In the following, I have divided Nieuhof's drawings into several categories for deeper analysis.

Chinese figures and their costume

In the course of their journey from Canton to Peking, the Dutch envoys and their suite encountered Chinese people of different social classes, from the local officials who entertained them to the displaced beggars and buskers who wandered around due to the civil war.²⁰⁶ And when passing by Chinese cities, according to Nieuhof's description, the statues of Chinese gods in the local temples also aroused the envoys' interest. Without doubt, the exotic costume worn by these figures were appealing to contemporary European readers curious about China and its people.

We have no way of knowing exactly what Nieuhof's impression of Chinese court costume was when he first encountered Chinese officials, but here follows a description of a Western response to Chinese court robes and accessories when they were first exhibited three hundred years later in the Metropolitan Museum in 1930:

The general brilliancy of colour and the audacity of colour combinations [of Chinese court robes] at first seem to the Westerner garish and outlandish—at best, exotic—but given a little time to recover from the first shock, we rapidly become aware that the Chinese are never crude or untutored, but that the vividness of their colours is based on centuries of visual experience and while pitched in a more violent key than that to which we are accustomed is nevertheless intelligent and harmonious.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ In the Paris manuscript, there are five drawings on the theme of Chinese figures: two of Chinese Buddhist statues, two of Chinese officials, and one of beggars and buskers.

²⁰⁷ Alan Priest, "The Exhibition of Chinese Court Robes and Accessories," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 26:12 (Dec. 1931): 283.

This review shows how Western viewers' opinions of Chinese costumes changed from shock to admiration. This shift in attitude was the exact purpose of this exhibition, which was to "give the Westerner a sense of the richness and variety of Chinese costume."²⁰⁸ As in this twentieth-century New York exhibition, the representations of the Chinese figures and their customs in the Paris manuscript were intended to show readers what Chinese people and their costumes looked like in real life.

The first Chinese officials who Nieuhof frequently encountered when he arrived in Canton were the viceroys,²⁰⁹ and their costume left a deep impression on him as he made a very detailed description of the clothes worn by the senior viceroy at the banquet:

At the entrance into the room on the right-hand sat the ambassadors with their followers, and over against the ambassadors the Vice Roy sat alone opposite to the ambassadors, being placed upon a broad four square seat, covered with curious carpet, according to the draught in the annexed print, in a lemon coloured gown, embroidered with golden dragons; and behind in his cap he wore the badge of royalty, a peacocks tail, about his neck a chain of white saphirs of great value and in much request, being scarce among the Chinese, and worn as an ornament of high esteem only by their nobles and persons of great quality; on his thumb also he wore an ivory ring, as an emblem signifying

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ The Dutch envoys were frequently invited by Chinese local officials. See Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 74, 77, 79, 86, 93, 100, and so forth.

the undaunted courage of the Tartar people, who likewise use rings upon their fingers for the defense of their hands when their draw their bows.²¹⁰

This account certainly suggests that Nieuhof had the chance to closely observe the senior viceroy and that he was quite familiar with Chinese court costumes and their accessories. He not only noticed the insignia of the robe and the decorations on the hat, but he was also aware of the hierarchical significance of the necklace and the practical function of the thumb ring. According to the description in the accompanying text, the official in this drawing (fig. 4.1) is Shang Kexi (尚可喜, 1604–1676), the viceroy entrusted with full civil and military authority over Guangdong province in the early Qing Dynasty.²¹¹ Considering the fact that he was the most important official to host the embassy in Canton and arranged the negotiations on trading relationship issues, as well as the embassy's visit to Peking afterwards, Nieuhof's comprehensive grasp and understanding of these details is not surprising.

In this drawing, Shang Kexi is sitting cross-legged on a patterned carpet. The pencil and chalk marks are visible in the contour of the official's costume, such as the curious peacock tail, the collar, the sleeves, the long necklace, and the lower part of the cloth. Although these marks are rough and the clearer representation of the costume relies on the rendering in pen

²¹⁰ Ibid., 45.

²¹¹ Shang Kexi was originally a Ming dynasty general, but in 1634 he transferred his loyalty to the Manchu kingdom of Manchuria, which was encroaching on China from the north-east. By 1644, when the Manchus conquered China and proclaimed the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), Shang was a leading Qing general. In 1649, he had the title *Pingnan Wang* (prince who pacifies the south) bestowed on him and was sent to conquer the southern province of Guangdong. See Peter Allan Lorge, *War, Politics and Society in Early Modern China, 900–1795* (London: Routledge, 2005), 152–155; Pamela Kyle Crossley, *The Manchus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 93–95.

and watercolour, they still offer a general design and impression of what Chinese official costume looks like. To figure out whether this design in pencil and chalk is based on direct observation, it is necessary to compare this drawing with Chinese pictorial material.



Figure 4.1. Drawing folio 23 in the Paris manuscript.

There are two interesting examples showing the official costume for the rank of viceroy, the highest rank in the provincial administration. One is a Chinese portrait of Shang Kexi (fig. 4.2) produced by an unknown Chinese artist in 1675.²¹² In this painting, he sits upright in an armchair, one hand on his leg and one hand holding his court necklace—a conventional pose for a formal portrait in the Qing Dynasty. At this time the Manchus required the Han Chinese who joined their administration to wear official Manchu dress, hoping that a uniformity of dress would reduce tension

²¹² This portrait was one of seven kept by each of his sons, probably for ancestor worship. It was made in 1675, one year before Shang Kexi's death.

between Manchus and the Han Chinese.²¹³ Mandarins from the civil administration and military had to wear Manchu-style pigtails and don a modification of the Manchu robe for formal occasions. Among the elite, clothing in the Qing Dynasty was divided into three categories according to their formality: formal, semi-formal, and informal. Formal attire, especially the surcoat and *chao fu*, was worn on ritual occasions by high-profile officials of the highest status.²¹⁴ Semi-formal dress, normally the dragon robe and *pi ling* collar, was required to be worn when dealing with formal and governmental affairs. Informal dress was usually for private and non-official occasions.²¹⁵ The material, colour, and decorative motifs of clothing in the Qing Dynasty identified its owner's status. Similarly, accessories including hats, court beads, and girdle were worn not only for fashion and decoration, but to signal their wearer's rank and prestige.²¹⁶ Therefore, in this formal portrait, the representation of Shang Kexi's dress, including the hat, *pi ling*, surcoat decorated with dragons and other patterns that indicate his high official rank, give an idea of what the official costume looked like in the seventeenth century.

²¹³ Valery M. Garrett, *Chinese Dress: from the Qing Dynasty to the Present* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 2007), 68.

²¹⁴ The *chaofu* was derived from a Buddhist rosary and used to be worn at the imperial court and for principal sacrificial ceremonies. See John E. Vollmer, *Decoding Dragons: Status Garments in Ch'ing Dynasty China* (Eugene: University of Oregon Museum of Art, 1983), 33.

²¹⁵ See Iris Barrel Apfel, *Dragon Threads: Court Costumes of the Celestial Kingdom: Chinese Textiles from the Iris Barrel Apfel and ATTATA Foundation Collections* (Newark: Newark Museum, 1992), 28.

²¹⁶ See Valery M. Garrett, *Chinese Clothing: An Illustrated Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 30; also see Apfel, *Dragon Threads*, 28.



Figure 4.2. Unknown artist, *Portrait of Shang Kexi*, 268x127cm, 1675, Palace Museum, Shenyang.

If some people doubt the true-to-life quality of the Chinese traditional pictorial approach, because for instance, the official's face and hands are treated in flat tones without shadows, a nineteenth-century photograph of Liu Changyu (fig. 4.3) shows a more realistic picture. As a viceroy governing the same place as Shang Kexi, namely Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, in this photograph, Liu wears the official formal court attire comprising a summer hat, court robe with civil rank badge, court necklace, *pi ling*, and *chao fu*, the formal court dress worn by a high-ranking viceroy on the important occasions.



Figure 4.3. Liu Changyu, governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, wearing official formal court attire, 1863.

Nieuhof would have encountered Shang Kexi wearing such formal dress, but on the occasion of the banquet as shown in the drawing, the latter seemingly did not bother to wear the surcoat outside his dragon robe and *pi ling* around his neck. Instead, he wore only a richly ornamented dragon robe, which was usually worn on semi-formal court occasions or when conducting official business.²¹⁷ Figure 4.4 illustrates what a dragon robe looks like. It is a full-length coat with sleeves and a curved overlapping right front flap. To make it easier to ride in, the Manchu added slits at the centre seams of the front and back hems to supplement those already at the sides. The sleeves end in horse-hoof cuffs, which were used to protect the wearer's hands when he was riding in bad weather. The dragon robes were

²¹⁷ For a formal occasion, the dragon robe was often worn beneath certain more formal surcoat.

usually decorated with various designs such as dragons, clouds, flowers, or simple arabesques scattering over the entire surface of the garment.



Figure 4.4. A Richly Embroidered Blue Dragon Robe, Guangxu Period (1875-1908), Private Collection.

The garment worn by Shang Kexi in Nieuhof's drawing incorporates most of the features of the dragon robe, such as its full length, side fastenings, tapered sleeves, and decorative design of clouds. But there are also a number of confusing details perhaps attributable to the rough depiction in pencil and chalk. The most confusing representation is the bottom part of the dragon robe. The marks in pencil and chalk only sketch the outline of the viceroy's crossed legs and do not show how the robe confines his legs. This causes the illusion that the viceroy is wearing a pair of trousers and that his limbs are encased in the trouser legs. However, as mentioned above, the bottom part of the dragon robe has four separate slits at the sides and the centre of the front and back seams, so when the wearer sits down the split allows the robe to spread out instead of confining the legs as trousers would have done. The depiction of the cuffs in pencil and chalk

is also so generic that it barely provides details for the later depiction in pen and watercolour. Originally, horse-hoof cuffs at the end of the sleeves intended to protect the wearer's hands, and in the Qing Dynasty, it was a sign of courtesy that the garment be tailored to cover at least half of the hands particularly on formal occasions, as shown in the Chinese portrait.²¹⁸ However, in this drawing, only Shang Kexi's left hand is covered by the cuff, and his right hand is exposed where the cuff seems to have disappeared.

His court hat, or *chaoguan*, the symbol most indicative of the wearer's status and the formality of the occasion, corresponds to Shang Kexi's rank and ceremonial importance of the banquet, which was held in February. Accordingly, he should be wearing a winter hat, which is supposed to have a turned-up brim trimmed with sable or fox fur, and a padded crown covered with a red fringe teased at the edges to stand out.²¹⁹ For such high-ranking officials as Shang Kexi, the crown of the hat was always adorned with overlapping peacock feather plumes (*hua yu*), a sign of great honour bestowed by the emperor (fig. 4.5).²²⁰ Obviously, these characteristics of the high-ranking official's winter hat, such as the fur on the brim and the peacock feather plumes attached to the hat, have been clearly represented in the drawing. But there is still a slight deviation in respect of the plumes: whereas they are supposed to be exactly at the back of the hat, the penciled

²¹⁸ On the sleeves ended in horse-hoof cuffs, see Valery M. Garrett, *Mandarin Squares: Mandarins and Their Insignia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 20.

²¹⁹ See Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhoofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 34–35. From the eighth month of the Chinese calendar a winter hat was worn; the summer hat was worn from the beginning of the third month of the Chinese calendar. To a certain extent, these careful observations do correspond with the rules governing the dress and the changing of court costume in the Qing Dynasty. On the standard and rules of the official's hat, see Garrett, *Chinese Clothing*, 42–43; Apfel, *Dragon Threads*, 36.

²²⁰ See Garrett, *Chinese Dress*, 70. Also see Valery M. Garrett and Elizabeth Berg, *A Collector's Guide to Chinese Dress Accessories* (Singapore: Times, 1997), 37–45.

drawing shows them somewhat to the side. Perhaps it looks better like this but it deviates from reality. Therefore, the general impression brought by the depiction in pencil and chalk indicates that the representation of the official's costume is closely related to a direct observation; but the confusing details also suggest that the preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk is very rough and does not offer a very specific design for the later depiction in pen and watercolour.



Figure 4.5. Winter Hat Used by the Imperial Nobility, the Qing Dynasty, Royal Ontario Museum.

Pencil and chalk marks are also clearly visible in the representation of the religious statues of King-Kang and Guan-Yin. According to the accompanying text, the first statue was situated in a temple on the left bank of a river close to the town of Yizheng (仪征). In Zhuang Guotu's opinion, this temple was the Guandi Miao (关帝庙), a temple dedicated to the worship of Guandi, a deified hero of the Three Kingdoms period (AD 221–280).²²¹ In the Ming Dynasty, he was revered as the god of war and

²²¹ See Blussé and Guotu, *A Study of the First Dutch Embassy Visit to China*, 109. However, this is uncertain. As Nieuwhof did not provide the specific location of the temple, it is hard to locate it.

protector of China. However, Nieuhof's text says the temple was dedicated to King-Kang (also known as the Four Heavenly Kings),²²² statues of which are commonly placed near the entrances to temples as guardians of the sacred precinct.

Normally four King-Kangs stand or sit in two groups on either side of the entrance, but this drawing shows only one King-Kang seated close to a gate-like frame (fig. 4.6). In this drawing, the sketch in pencil and chalk makes a clear outline of the King-Kang's crown, his face, his body, and some details of the garment decoration as well. The general impression is of the King-Kang seated wearing a crown and clad in armour; his left hand leans on his left knee but his right arm is broken.



Figure 4.6. Drawing folio 103 in the Paris manuscript.

Moreover, as a statue of a King-Kang is very common in all kinds of temples, it is also possible that Nieuhof made the drawing in a quite different temple.

²²² The Dutch text is “een pagoda van d’afgod Hingang, die zeer vermaardt en voll beelden is.” (A pagoda of the deity Hingang (King-Kang), who is so famous and renowned.) See Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 44.

To a large extent, this impression matches the actual seated-statue of King-Kang which is very common in Chinese temples. As shown in the following photograph of King-Kang in Baima Si (the White Horse Temple,²²³ see figure 4.7), the King-Kang is seated, displaying a gesture similar to that of the King-Kang in the drawing. The golden crown, his facial features, his costume, and the garment decorations all share a number of similarities with the King-Kang in the drawing. This suggests that the preliminary design of the statue of King-Kang in pencil and chalk is very likely based on direct observation. But it is noteworthy that the depiction in pencil and chalk is very generic and a number of details are quite confusing. For instance, the King-Kang usually holds his weapon or accoutrement in his hand to fight the enemies of Buddhism, as shown in the photograph, but it is missing in the drawing.²²⁴ For unknown reason, the right hand where the weapon should be held in, along with his forearm, is gone as well. The representation of the remaining part of his right arm seems unnatural, because it is not symmetrical to the left arm in terms of its length and the thickness. Another interesting detail is the decoration at the waist of the King-Kang. It should be a dragon's head, as shown in the photograph, but in this drawing the preliminary depiction in chalk just roughly sketches a circle mark and the later depiction in pen turns it into a human head.

²²³ White Horse Temple (白马寺) is located in the city of Luoyang, Henan Province. It was the first official Buddhist temple in China, established in 68 AD.

²²⁴ They are also called Buddha's warrior attendants. As their name implies, they are usually equipped with weapon. For instance, see the description of the Miji King Kang Xin Han, *China's Famous Monasteries (中国名寺)* (Beijing: Oriental Press, 2006), 37. Meanwhile, the statue in this drawing also resembles Weituo, an important guardian of Chinese Buddhist temples; see Louise Tythacott, *The Lives of Chinese Objects: Buddhism, Imperialism and Display* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 29–31.



Figure 4.7. Statue King Kang at Bai Ma Si Temple, the city Luoyang, Henan Province.

In addition to the statue, the pencil and chalk sketch also illustrates two tiny human figures beside the King-Kang: one kneels on the floor and kowtows to the statue while the other, dressed in Western clothes (surely one of the members of the Dutch embassy), stands beside the statue. Their tiny size is apparently intended to convey a sense of the statue's immensity. Moreover, the depiction in pencil and chalk attempts to show the viewer the interior of the temple, but it lacks perspective and is too crudely rendered to provide any definite information about the background setting.

The representation of another Chinese religious statue, Guan-Yin (fig. 4.8), commonly known as the Goddess of Mercy in the West, is quite similar. The accompanying text includes a very brief description of the statue: "Half an hour's sail outside the northern city wall in the direction of Peking, a pagan temple where many curiosities can be seen stands on the

riverbank. In the rearmost building, there is a beautifully-fashioned, thirty-foot-high statue of a goddess.”²²⁵

According to the description of the location outside the city wall of Linqing (临清), this pagan temple was very likely the Yongshou Temple (永寿寺), which was built in the Wanli period (1573–1620) of the Ming Dynasty. Unfortunately, with the exception of a pagoda, the temple has not survived and glimpses of its magnificence can be obtained only through historical records. According to the local county annals of Linqing, there was an iron statue of Guan-Yin approximately thirty metres high.²²⁶ (Statues of Guan-Yin were often made much larger than life size to awe worshippers.)²²⁷ These Chinese records confirm Nieuhof’s description of this statue.

In this drawing, the sketch in pencil and chalk illustrates the crown of Guan-Yin, her face, her long robe and sleeves, her hands, and the garment decoration as well as the cloth folds. The additional refinements in pen and watercolour make this drawing a more vivid representation of the statue. She wears a crown and is clad in a long, enveloping robe with a floral border; her long sleeves drape gracefully down. The thumb, third, and fourth fingers of her right hand encircle her left wrist, while the index and

²²⁵ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 47. The Dutch text is “een half uur buiten de muuren aan de noordzij dezer stadt dicht an de kant van ’t water, als men na Pekin vaart, staat een heidensche tempell daar veel vreemdigheden te zien zijn. In ’t achterste gebou staat een affgodinne van 30 voeten hood, die zeer well gemaakt en na de kunst is opgetoidt.”

²²⁶ The temple Yongshousi was built in Wanli period, the Ming dynasty. It was located outside of Tucheng. There was a statue of Guan-yin cast with iron and it was around eleven meters high. And there was also a pagoda, built at the same time as the temple. See *The Gazetteer of Lin Qing Prefecture (临清县志)*, in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu (中国方志丛书)* (Taipei: Chengwen Publishing House, 1934), 282.

²²⁷ For religious statues in China, see William Watson and Chuimei Ho, *The Arts of China after 1620* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 96–97. In addition, although Nieuhof did not describe how elaborately this statue was decorated, gilding on metal was the most common surface colour on religious statues.

little fingers are extended. This gesture is repeated with the left hand, but the thumb and middle fingers of her left hand grasp a string of beads in a “counting the pearls” gesture.



Figure 4.8. Drawing folio 134 in the Paris manuscript.



Figure 4.9. Standing white-robed Guan-Yin, gilt bronze, late Ming-early Qing Dynasty (17th–18th centuries); 54 in. x 18 in. Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

Statues of Guan-Yin in this shape and making these gestures are not just for temple altars; decorative sculptures made of various materials and of smaller size were often placed in a study room or specific prayer room instead of a big hall or open place. Yet they still reflect the essential features of the standing statue of Guan-Yin. As can be seen in figure 4.9, the gilt-bronze Guan-Yin standing on a bowl-shaped lotus pedestal is delicately built with well-refined details.²²⁸ The gestures of the right hand encircling the left wrist and the left hand holding a pearl greatly resembles the gesture of Guan-Yin in the drawing, although the fingers of her right hand do not curve. The long robe with long sleeves is also similar in appearance. These similarities suggest that Nieuhof's drawing is based on direct observation. But another possibility cannot be neglected, namely that many ceramic statues of Buddhist and Taoist deities were imported to the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, and that Nieuhof might have had access to such a statue when he was in the Netherlands and made his drawing from that.²²⁹ Keeping this in mind, I would like to analyse drawings of other subjects to see whether close examination of these throws any light on this last possibility.

The grotesque rockeries and hills

Chinese hills and rockeries which have a bizarre form or a splendid profile left such a deep impression on Nieuhof that he not only made detailed descriptions of them in the text but also depicted them as the main subject of some landscape drawings. Many of them have been carefully

²²⁸ This statue was made in the late Ming–early Qing Dynasty (17th–18th centuries). See Diana Turner, *Chinese, Korean and Japanese Sculpture: in the Avery Brundage Collection, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1974), pl. 183.

²²⁹ On the statues of Buddhist deities in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, see Jessica Rawson, *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 159; also see Watson and Ho, *The Arts of China after 1620*, 96–100.

depicted in pencil and chalk first. To contemporary Dutch viewers, who lived in a flat landscape, the shape of these rockeries might have seemed too bizarre to be made from life. A comparative study of these drawings and Chinese actual scenes will be able to examine whether or to what extent these drawings are made on the basis of direct observation.

One of the most impressive representations of these motifs can be seen in drawing folio 42 (fig. 4.10). In this drawing, the foreground is occupied by water and a triangular bank appears in the lower right corner; in the background, a number of grotesque cliffs rise abruptly out of the ground. The preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk is discernable in the contour of the tall and twisting cliffs. The accompanying text in the Paris manuscript does not offer much information about the location of this scene. The last sentence on folio 41 and the first sentence on folio 44 in the manuscript reads, “We set off again and passed by the mountains that the Tartars called Five Horses’ Heads and passed by the wonderful landscape in Suttiene” (trocken weder voort en passierden ‘t gebergte dat de Tartars de Vijff Paards hoofden noemen en ‘t wonderlik landschap omtrent Suttiene).²³⁰ Between these pages are two drawings respectively showing these exotic cliffs and a cityscape. Based on this description and sequence, Zhuang Guotu interprets this scene as the Five Horses’ Heads, a group of fantastically formed mountains situated to the east of the town of Shaozhou.²³¹

²³⁰ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 41–42.

²³¹ Blussé and Guotu, *A Study of the First Dutch Embassy Visit to China*, 57.



Figure 4.10. Drawing folio 42 in the Paris manuscript.

In reality, the Five Horses' Heads Mountains are located north-east rather than east of Shaozhou. Moreover, as the photograph (fig. 4.11) of the actual place reveals, the Five Horse Heads Mountains look quite different from the cliffs in the drawing folio 42. The cliffs in the drawing are less robust, higher, and more grotesque. In this sense, the grotesque cliffs represented in the drawing folio 42 should not be regarded as the Five Horse Heads Mountains. Comparing this photograph with the illustration in Van Meurs's edition in 1665 entitled "Vyf Paards Hoofden" (Five Horses' Heads) (fig. 4.12), however, one finds that the mountains in the illustration actually resemble those in the photograph, and this suggests that the caption on this illustration is accurate. Moreover, there is no corresponding drawing in the Paris manuscript representing a scene similar to this illustration, which suggests that the illustrations in Van Meurs's edition are actually based on other sources than just the drawings in the manuscript, namely Nieuhof's sketches.



Figure 4.11. Photograph of the Five Horse Heads Mountains, Shaoguan, Guangdong Province.

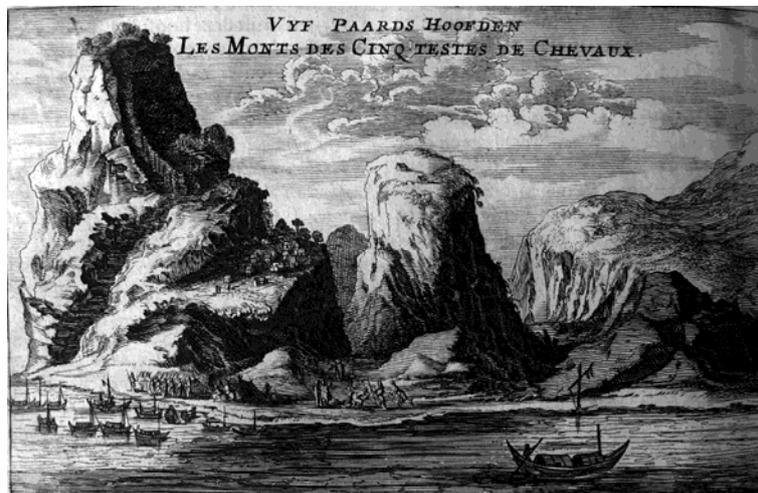


Figure 4.12. Engraving of “Vyf Paards Hoofden” from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

In light of this, it would be more accurate to identify this scene by reference to the inscription on the corresponding illustration in Van Meurs’s

edition. According to the inscription “Suitjeen” on the illustration in figure 4.13, which shows a scene similar to drawing in folio 42, these exotic cliffs are in the vicinity of Suytjeen²³² (probably a transliteration of the county of Shixing, 始兴县), the description of which appears at the beginning of folio 44 in the text of the Paris manuscript.²³³

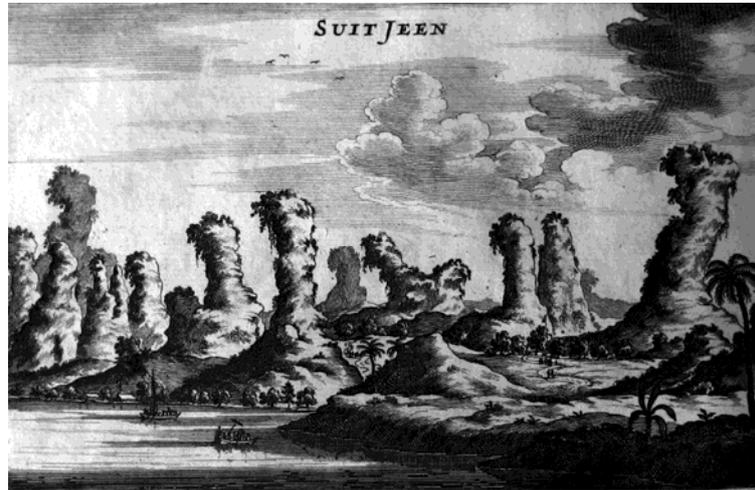


Figure 4.13. Engraving of “Suitjeen” from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

Surrounded by mountains, this small town offers some fantastic mountain vistas, which may have left deep impression to Nieuhof to make drawings.²³⁴ But because the inscription “Suitjeen,” is too general to provide any specific information about the exact location, it is not easy to find the actual place for a comparison.

²³² In the text of the manuscript, the place is named “Suttiene” and in the manuscript “Suytjeen.”

²³³ As no other mountains are mentioned in the description of this area in the accompany text, with the exception of the Five Horse Heads Mountains, the reader will automatically regard this impressive drawing as a representation of this range.

²³⁴ For instance, this town has the renowned *Danxia Shan* (丹霞山), but it has a different shape from the cliffs in the drawing.

Nevertheless, leaving their enormous size aside, the shape of the cliffs is reminiscent of Chinese rockeries, such as those in the Shizilin Garden (“Forest of Lions” 狮子林) at Yuyuan (豫园, fig. 4.14) in the city Suzhou (苏州), the best-known of all such rockeries in China. Here, most of the rockeries are slender and elegant in shape and range from one metre to five or six metres in height.²³⁵ Both the rockeries in the garden and the cliffs in the drawing have a relatively straight and thin body in the shape of square pillar capped with an irregular peak. In reality, rockeries are important decoration elements that can often be seen in Chinese garden as scenic attractions. Some stand on the roadside, and others are placed in the middle of ponds. They have special meaning to the Chinese literati, because they represent a microcosm of the universe on which Chinese literati could meditate within the confines of garden or studio.²³⁶ Some rockeries were designed from life, a notable example being found at Shilin (石林), as shown in figure 4.15,²³⁷ so that Chinese literati could appreciate the scenery of distant mountains through the miniature mountains without leaving their own garden or studios at all.²³⁸ These similarities suggest that the cliffs in the drawing are based on some unidentified mountain view, or more likely on the man-made rockeries in a Chinese garden in the county of Suytjeen. Regardless, they were probably drawn on the basis of direct observation.

²³⁵ Shizilin Garden is one of the four most famous gardens in Suzhou. Constructed in 1342, it is best known for its rockeries, which are mostly built up of limestone taken from Lake Taihu and are piled into diverse forms resembling lions and other animals. For more information on the Shizilin Garden, see Tun-chen Liu and Joseph C. Wang, *Chinese Classical Gardens of Suzhou* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 105–10. Moreover, the man-made rockeries standing in the garden or the scholar’s desk imitate the mountains from nature. See Jerome Silbergeld, “Beyond Suzhou: Region and Memory in the Gardens of Sichuan,” *The Art Bulletin* 86:2 (Jun. 2004): 209–12.

²³⁶ See Silbergeld, “Beyond Suzhou: Region and Memory in the Gardens of Sichuan,” 211.

²³⁷ Shilin is located in Yunnan province, known for its grotesque rocks.

²³⁸ Silbergeld, “Beyond Suzhou: Region and Memory in the Gardens of Sichuan,” 211–12.



Figure 4.14. Photograph of the rockeries in Shizilin, Suzhou, Jiangsu Province.



Figure 4.15. Photograph of Shilin in Yunnan Province.

Nieuhof was so familiar with Chinese man-made rockeries that he not only wrote detailed descriptions of those he encountered on his journey, but he also drew one (fig. 4.16) that he described in the text as follows:



Figure 4.16. Drawing foilo 57 in the Paris manuscript.

At the entrance to this place stand various antique rockeries which have been artificially wrought, but most of them were destroyed in the war (which is a great pity). The biggest one is about 40 feet high and has two-tiers. People can walk up and down the spiral staircase and each tier is four feet wide. These rockeries are made of clay and similar substances; their shape is so natural that people are amazed by the artistry and ingeniousness of these constructions which imitate nature so closely.²³⁹

²³⁹ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 39. The Dutch text reads “In’t inkomen van deze plaats staan verscheide antijkse klippen, door kunst gemaakt, maar zijn van den oorlog (dat groot jammer is) meest geschonden. Dáan zienlikste van all is omtrent 40 voeten hoog en heeft twee verdiepingen, daar men door een windeltrap opgaat die boven en beneden elk vier treden wijd zijn. Dit is allemaal van klay en diergelike materialen in een vorme zoo gebacken, dat men zich verwonderdt over de kunst en vindinge van dat werk daar de natuur zoo natuurlijk is naageaapt.” These rockeries are also described in the official report; see VOC 1220, fol. 452.

Apparently, Nieuhof's knowledge of the Chinese rockery included not only its external appearance but an understanding of how it was built and its practical purpose. However because the rockeries which Nieuhof encountered do not exist now, it is impossible to make a comparison between the drawing and what these rockeries actually looked like. Although some representations seem exaggerated, such as the enormous size of the rockeries and the broad stairway, this drawing confirms that Nieuhof had seen Chinese rockeries and obtained certain knowledge about them.

In addition to the cliffs, a Guan-Yin Temple located in a mountain would also have seemed incredible to a contemporary reader at first sight. Nieuhof's encounter with this temple was not particularly pleasant because the rapids were fast and dangerous and the envoys' boat was inevitably dashed against jagged rocks.²⁴⁰ Perhaps because of this hazardous experience, he gave only a very brief description of the temple: "On that day we passed the pagoda dedicated to Conjam Siam [Guan-Yin Yan, 观音岩], in a hollowed cliff, where people cannot arrive by water." (Dezen dagh passierden wij de vermaarde pagoda van Conjam Siam, in een uitgeholde klip, daar men niet als te water kan aankomen.)²⁴¹ A more comprehensive description can be found in the published book:

The next day, being the 25 Of March, we came in sight of that wonderful and strange Idol Temple call'd Koniansiam, which the Chinese hold in great veneration, bringing as rich and fat Offerings thither, as to that of Sangwonhab: It lies on the River

²⁴⁰ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 36.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

side, in a solitary, wild, and mountainous country: your first approaches conduct you up with convenient Stone Steps; after you make your Way through blind Paths and cavernous Passes, forc'd with much Art and Industry. These Idolaters believing as the ancient Heathen, that Groves and high Places were most venerable Mansions, and yielding a more reverential Awe to their Gods, and less discovering under a Shade their Priests juggling Impostures. We continu'd here a while with all our Fleet, till the Natives had perform'd their Devotions at this Temple, which afterward our Ambassadors visited. The incredible to relate, with how much superstitious Zeal, wanting our true Lights, they pour forth there their Ejaculations, and as freely their Bounty, offering prodigally their Country Products of all sorts of Fruits, Birds, and Beasts.²⁴²

According to this account, there is a temple for the worship of Guan-Yin on the riverbank, and after entering the temple, one passes through several dark paths and caves decorated with art. This detailed description evokes the actual scene. As shown in figure 4.17 (*A* shows the whole mountain, and *B* shows a closer view of the cave on the left side of the mountain), there is a cave carved out of the huge rock on the bank of the Bei River (北江). This cave is more than one hundred metres deep and more than twenty metres high.²⁴³

²⁴² Nieuhof, *An embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 50.

²⁴³ Guan-yin Yan is located on the north side of Yingde. The depth of the cave is 125 meters. It is 22 meters high and artificially divided into three levels.

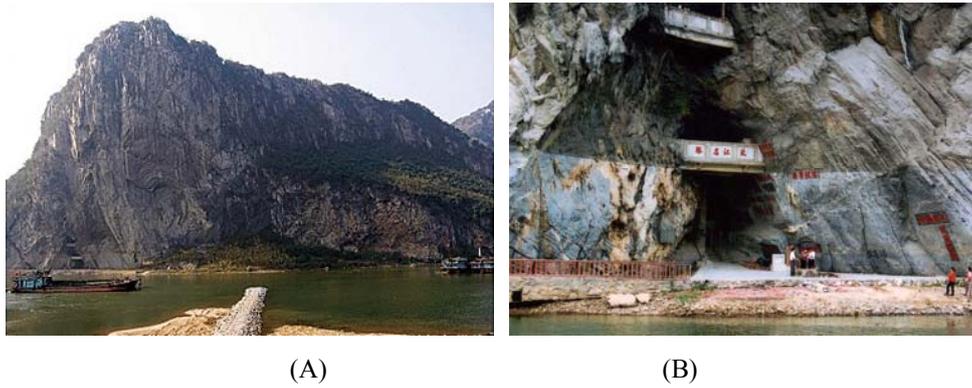


Figure 4.17. Photo of the Guan-Yin temple in Yingde. *A*, The whole mountain. *B*, A close-up of the cave on the left side of the mountain.

But when comparing Nieuhof's description, the drawing (fig. 4.18), and a photograph of the actual scene, one finds two discrepancies. First, the temple mentioned in the description does not show up in the photograph; second, the cave shown in the photograph does not exist in the drawing. The drawing represents a lofty, monumental mountain landscape, beginning in the foreground with a view of a river and sailing boat; among the rugged peak of the fantastical mountain a cave is suggested by the shade depicted in dark watercolour; from the inside of the cave emerges a box-like architecture that is supposed to represent the Guan-Yin temple, as described in the text; this temple can be accessed by a stairway that extends to the riverbank. In the drawing, the temple is constructed in a wide and open cave, but the photograph shows a deep and lofty cave constructed inside the rock with three levels, but without any roofs and a gateway. Does this mean that the representation of this scene and the architecture in the drawing is not based on direct observation?



Figure 4.18. Drawing foil 38 in the Paris manuscript.

A review of photographs taken in the nineteenth century by British photographer John Thomson (1837–1921) gives some clues to this question. Thomson travelled in China between 1868 and 1872 and he recorded this bizarre landscape with his camera,²⁴⁴ as shown in figure 4.19. The panoramic view of the mountain in John Thomson’s photograph, *A*, shows a grand temple complex located on the right side of the mountain, and picture *B* is a close-up view. Therefore, this photograph indicates that both the representations in the modern photograph and Nieuhof’s drawing are partly accurate, and as late as the nineteenth century there did exist an idol temple as described in Nieuhof’s text and depicted in his drawing! Therefore,

²⁴⁴ John Thomson was a pioneering Scottish photographer, geographer, and traveller. He is the first photographer known to have documented the people and landscape of China for publication and dissemination in the Western world. Between 1868 and 1872, he travelled extensively from Guangdong to Fujian, and then to eastern and northern China, including the imperial capital Peking, before heading down the Yangtze River, covering a total of nearly 5000 miles. When he returned to London, Thomson played an active role informing the public about China. He wrote four books on the subject, the last one, *Through China with a Camera*, was published in 1898, twenty-five years after his travels. His books are the first photographic social documentation of China.

Nieuhof did make his drawing on the basis of eyewitness observation, though for unknown reasons he omitted the cave when he produced the drawing.

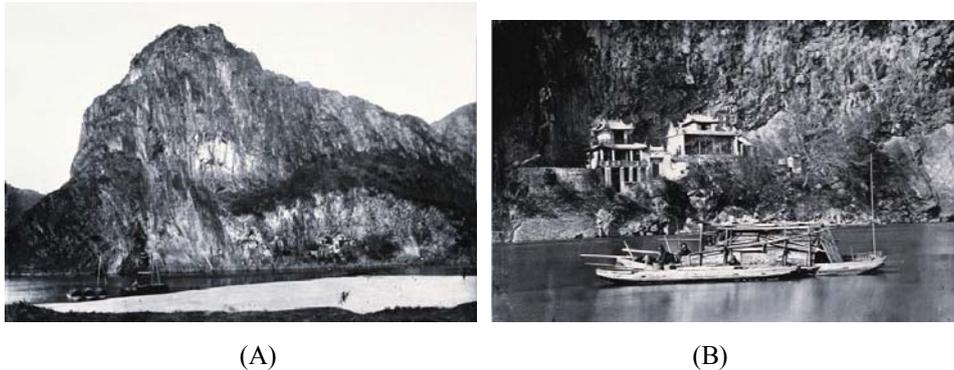


Figure 4.19. Photographs of Guan-Yin Yan taken by John Thomson, 1868-1872.

Historical event

In addition to Chinese figures and fanciful rocks and hills, Nieuhof's representation of some historical occasions are carefully rendered in pencil and chalk. The drawing in folio 13 (fig. 4.20) shows a banquet for the Dutch embassy hosted by the viceroys Shang Kexi and Geng Jimao while they were resident in Canton.²⁴⁵ As shown in this drawing, the banquet is being held in the open air on a riverbank outside the city wall. Observed from the water in the foreground, the Dutch ambassadors appear in the lower left accompanied by some Chinese officers. Opposite them, many Chinese officials or soldiers holding parasols stand to the right side. Behind them are two rows of tents about which the accompanying text reads, "in an open plain were pitched ten rich and stately tents by order of the viceroys."²⁴⁶ In

²⁴⁵ The exact date of this banquet is unknown; the date in the manuscript is 15 October, whereas in the printed book of 1665 it is 19 September.

²⁴⁶ Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 40.

the centre of the two rows of tents is a big tented pavilion beneath which are seated three figures who are very likely “both the viceroys and the Teutang.”²⁴⁷ The two rows of tents are supposed to be set out symmetrically; but the row of tents on the right has not been placed as neatly and in such an orderly fashion as that on the left side. What’s more, they are obviously not observed from the same perspective as those on the left. Then how should the actual setting of such an historical event look?



Figure 4.20. Drawing folio 13 in the Paris manuscript.

The answer to this question can be gleaned from some Chinese pictures that happen to record similar occasions. One appealing example is the print “Kaiyan Chenggong Zhu Jiangshi” (Victory Banquet for the Officers and Soldiers who Distinguished Themselves) by the French engraver Jacques-Philippe Le Bas (1707–1783), after the design by Giuseppe

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 40. The text reads, “In the tent in the middle sat both the viceroys and the Teutang next to one another, upon a very rich and curious wrought carpet.”

Castiglione, in 1770 (fig. 4.21).²⁴⁸ This print is part of a set of sixteen copper engravings based on the large wall paintings executed to commemorate Qing victories in its border wars between 1755 and 1759.²⁴⁹ The print presents the historical moment at which the Qianlong Emperor is rewarding his soldiers. Depicted from a bird's-eye view, the whole setting and figures are comprehensively represented. Just like the banquet presented in the drawing in the Paris manuscript, the event shown in this print is held in the open air and several tents and pavilions have been pitched. The arrangement of the composition is similar: the main pavilion (or building) is placed in the middle background and officials stand in two rows on either side, while the emperor assumes the dominant position in the foreground.

²⁴⁸ For more information about the battles and the series of prints, see Dematte and Reed, *China on Paper*, 198–99.

²⁴⁹ They were executed for the Qianlong Emperor by four foreign artist-priests: the Jesuits Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining), Jean-Denis Attiret (Wang Zhicheng), and Ignatius Sichelbart (Ai Qimeng), and the Augustinian Jean-Damascène Salusti (An Deyi). These designs were sent to Paris in 1765 and 1766, where this costly project was supervised by the French Foreign Minister Henri Léonard Jean Baptiste Bertin (1720–1792). Two hundred sets of the engravings were printed and delivered to Peking between 1772 and 1775. The series includes scenes of the battles, the surrender, and daring raids, as well as several triumphs and the celebrations. See Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Culture of War in China: Empire and the Military under the Qing Dynasty* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 36–45. Qianlong Emperor decided to have mass reproductions of the war illustrations made in the form of copper engravings. These were ordered to be made in Paris from copies of the sixteen war illustrations that were shipped from China on French East India Company ships. Subsequent series were drawn and engraved in China by Chinese artists and craftsmen, who may have learned or relearned this art from the Jesuits.

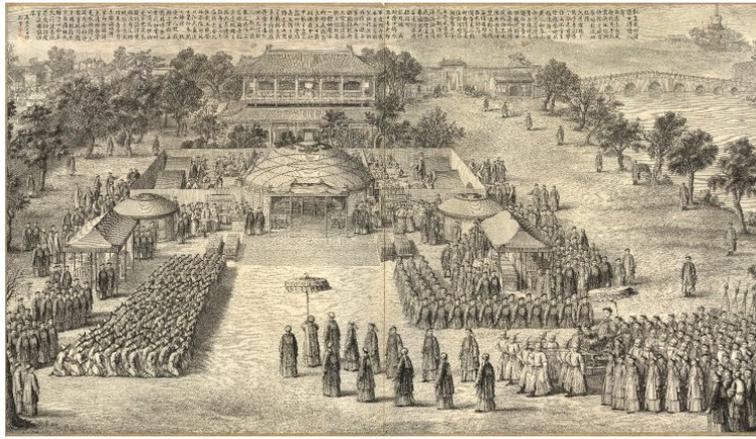


Figure 4.21. Jacques-Philippe Le Bas, “Kaiyan Chenggong Zhu Jiangshi” (Victory Banquet for the Officers and Soldiers who Distinguished Themselves), 1770.

A similar occasion is recorded in the print “Qianlong Emperor Meets Lord Macartney at Chengde” (fig. 4.22) by William Alexander.²⁵⁰ This depicts a reception at the imperial summer retreat in Chengde (承德) hosted by the Qianlong Emperor for the British delegation. The foreigners and his officers are shown in a setting and composition similar to that of the print “Kaiyan chenggong zhu jiangshi.” Given the fact that the latter was accorded a high status in the Qianlong collection and the former was depicted by a western skilled artist, it is safe to believe that the artists have faithfully recorded the respective historical moments and that their images can be used as a point of reference for reviewing and examining the corresponding drawing in the Paris manuscript.

²⁵⁰ This design was regarded by someone as a copy of the Chinese painting “Imperial Banquet in Wanshu Garden.” See Chuimei Ho and Bennet Bronson, *Splendors of China’s Forbidden City: The Glorious Reign of Emperor Qianlong* (London: Merrell, 2004), 105. Moreover, according to Frances Wood, Alexander made the image of the meeting between Lord Macartney and the Qianlong Emperor from a second-hand drawing by Lieutenant Henry William Parish, an artillery officer who accompanied the embassy and drew the occasion of the meeting. See Wood, “Closely Observed China: From William Alexander’s Sketches to His Published Work,” 98.

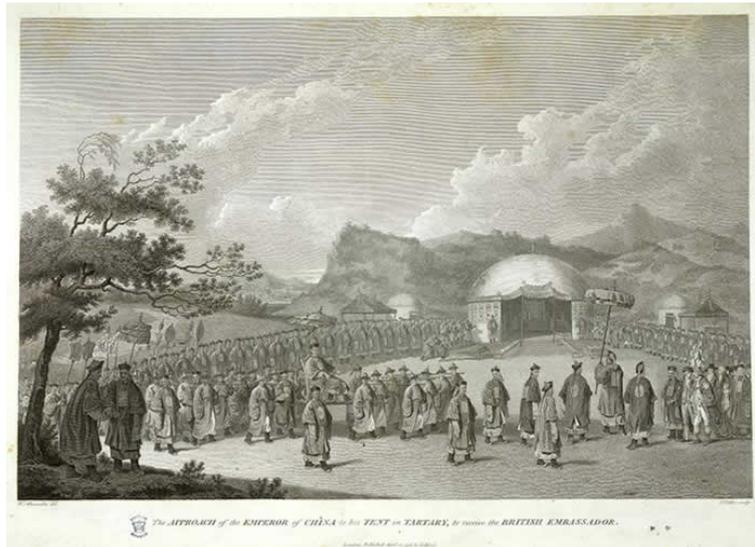


Figure 4.22. After William Alexander, “Qianlong Emperor Meets Lord Macartney at Chengde.”

Closer observation and comparison reveal the similarities and differences between the drawing and these two prints. Although the grandeur of the banquet in the drawing does not reach the same level as that of the banquet in the print—after all, the hosts at the former were merely local viceroys and that at the latter the Emperor—the basic ritual settings are very much alike and the banquet is conducted in a similar manner. These resemblances suggest that Nieuhof witnessed this historical event and the preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk may well be based on direct observation.

Some differences, however, show the clumsy and obscure depictions in the manuscript drawing. In addition to the disordered tent mentioned above, the main differences between the drawing and these prints are in the artistic technique and representation of various details. First and foremost, in contrast to the highly elaborate setting in these two prints, the scene in the

manuscript drawing appears to be rough and obscure. The vague treatment of the details may be attributable to the fact that Nieuhof was not as familiar with such formal rituals as the court artists were. Nevertheless, a more apparent reason could have been the level of his artistic skill. Although all of these works are produced by Western artists and the compositions were in the European style, the depth and spatial relationships of objects and figures in the drawing, as well as the tent, the frame of the setting and so forth, are not rendered as successfully as they are in the prints. In the drawing, there is no clear vanishing point, thus the spatial relationship between the foreground figures, the tents, and the background city wall is rather confused, and all the elements seem to have been compacted together. Therefore, it is not hard to conclude that these three works come from the hands of artists of quite different ability and quality in terms of event depiction. Nieuhof's lack of artistic skill might also explain the fact that the historical occasion in this drawing is not depicted in a panoramic view as it is in the prints, because that would have required more technical skill.

Chinese ship types

The Chinese boat is also one of the subjects that Nieuhof most commonly rendered in a preliminary pencil-and-chalk sketches. Nieuhof saw many types of Chinese boats because the Dutch envoy's journey from Canton to Peking went mainly by water. As a result, he includes Chinese boats as decoration in many cityscapes. For instance, in the drawing folio 84 (fig. 4.23), a magnificent boat takes a prominent position in the foreground and makes a significant contrast with the plain silhouette of the city in the background. The preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk can be seen clearly in the illustration of the structure of the boat, including its stern, three cabins and the windows, the hull, and the masts.



Figure 4.23. Drawing folio 84 in the Paris manuscript.

The most effective way to examine the degree to which the boat in the drawing reflects the features of Chinese boats of the period is to compare it with other pictures of Chinese traditional boats. Such vessels are not used anymore in modern China, but similar boats can be easily found in older Chinese paintings and prints, such as the painting “Kangxi Southern Inspection Tour” by Wang Hui (王翬, 1632-1717). Although this painting was finished in the last decade of seventeenth century, it can still be used as a reference to examine the representation of boats in Nieuhof’s manuscript for at least two reasons: first, the form of a traditional Chinese boat did not change significantly in half a century; second, it is a tradition for Chinese artists to follow their predecessors’ work, so the boats shown in “Kangxi Southern Inspection Tour” resemble the boats from earlier times. The boats in the middle of a section of this Chinese painting, as shown in figure 4.24, provide an interesting example. Boats in Nieuhof’s drawing and the Chinese painting share a similar structure in that both of them have three cabins and

the one at the stern has two decks. This indicates that the representation of Chinese boat in Nieuwhof's drawing, especially the preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk, is very likely to have been based on direct observation.



Figure 4.24. Wang Hui, “Kangxi Southern Inspection Tour,” 1690s, Vol.7, the University of Alberta, Canada.

However, because of the viewpoint, the facade of the three-cabin boat at the stern is not visible in this drawing. But it has been represented in the drawing folio 110 (figure 4.25, *A* shows the whole picture, and *B* shows the detail), which actually surveys various Chinese boat types. The boat with an impressive facade appears on the right side of drawing. The depictions in pencil and chalk illustrate the outline of the hull, the mast, the sail, as well as the bow and the entry port of the boat. Together with the later refinement in pen and watercolour, we can see that the bow is richly decorated with scrollwork and other details, and the entryway bears a strong resemblance to a typical Chinese gate. It is also noteworthy that the entryway has two tiers of upturned eaves and typical Chinese couplets written on either side of a

doorway.²⁵¹ With these characteristics, the contemporary viewer would believe this drawing is a trustworthy representation of Chinese boat.

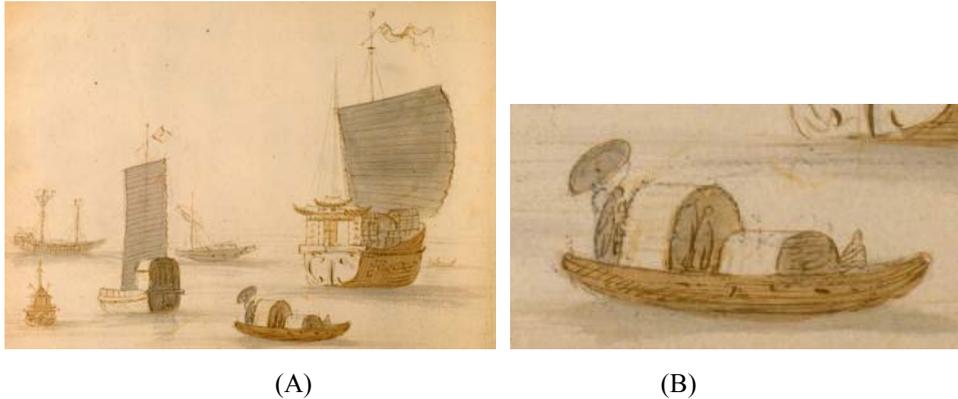


Figure 4.25. Drawing folio 110 in the Paris manuscript.

Vessels of similar structure and entryway can also be seen in Chinese pictorial material. A good example is a print in *The Great Collection of Ancient and Modern Books* (figure 4.26). Sharing the most remarkable features seen in the boat discussed above, this boat has a hull embellished with a lucky-clouds graphic pattern, a bow decorated with a traditional Chinese dragon's head, three cabins, and a tall mast rising from the middle part of the boat. The most attractive detail is the entryway, which, like Nieuhof's, takes the form of a Chinese traditional gate with two tiers of upturned eaves and Chinese couplets. These resemblances suggest that the representation of this boat reflects characteristics typical of traditional Chinese boats. But there is one apparently inconsistent detail in the drawing, namely that the arch-like entrance is constructed so close to the edge of bow

²⁵¹ A vertically written couplet is usually placed on either side of a doorway. For more information on the decorations on Chinese traditional boats, see G. R. G. Worcester, *Sail and Sweep in China: The History and Development of the Chinese Junk as Illustrated by the Collection of Junk Models in the Science Museum* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1966), 25–26.

that there is barely any room left at the bow for the boatmen to manoeuvre the ship or to enable the passengers to come on board.

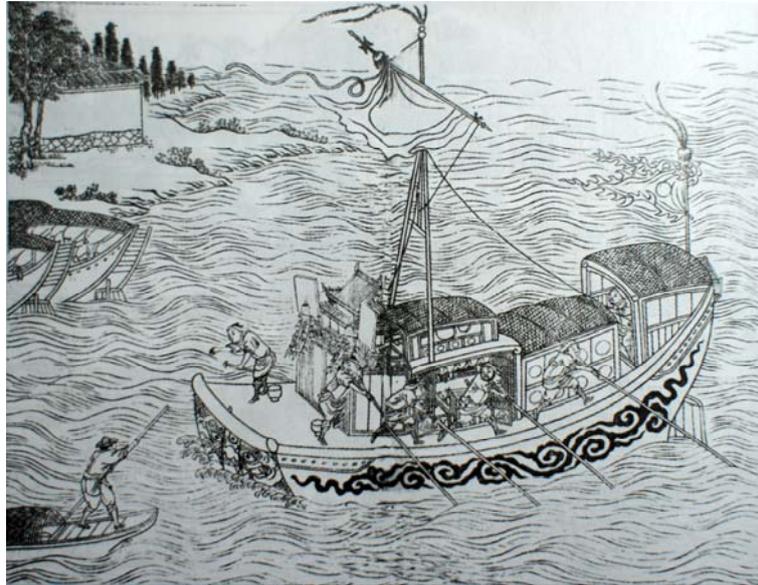


Figure 4.26. Engraving in *The Great Collection of Ancient and Modern Books*, 1701-1728.

In addition to the magnificent boat, some relatively ordinary boats also appear in the drawing folio 110, such as the two-cabin boat shown in the foreground. The preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk is discernable in this sampan, which is typical of the boat people of Canton who crowded the Pearl River until the end of the nineteenth century. It is constructed in a simple curved form and the front cabin is higher but less deep than the cabin at the rear. An umbrella is suspended at the bow while several passengers sit or stand on the boat. This two-cabin boat along with a group of passengers—or perhaps they are simply the family of the boatman and live aboard—is shown in different Chinese cityscapes. In the boat in the middle foreground of the cityscape of Canton, drawing folio 27 (figure 4.27; *A*

shows the whole drawing, and *B* shows its detail), the passengers have more or less changed their positions, though the shape of the boat remains the same in both drawings. This representation of the two-cabin sampan is quite trustworthy, as is evident also from a comparison with Chinese pictures like “Prosperous Suzhou” (姑苏繁华图) by Xu Yang. In this painting, around four hundred various Chinese traditional boats have been depicted. As shown in the detail of the scroll painting (figure 4.28, *A* shows a section of the painting, and *B* shows its detail), several boats are sailing in the river or stopped along the bank. Except for being observed from different viewpoint and presented with greater details, these two dark grey curved-cabins boats look much the same as the boats shown in the drawings in the Paris manuscript.



(A)



(B)

Figure 4.27. Drawing folio 27 in the Paris manuscript.

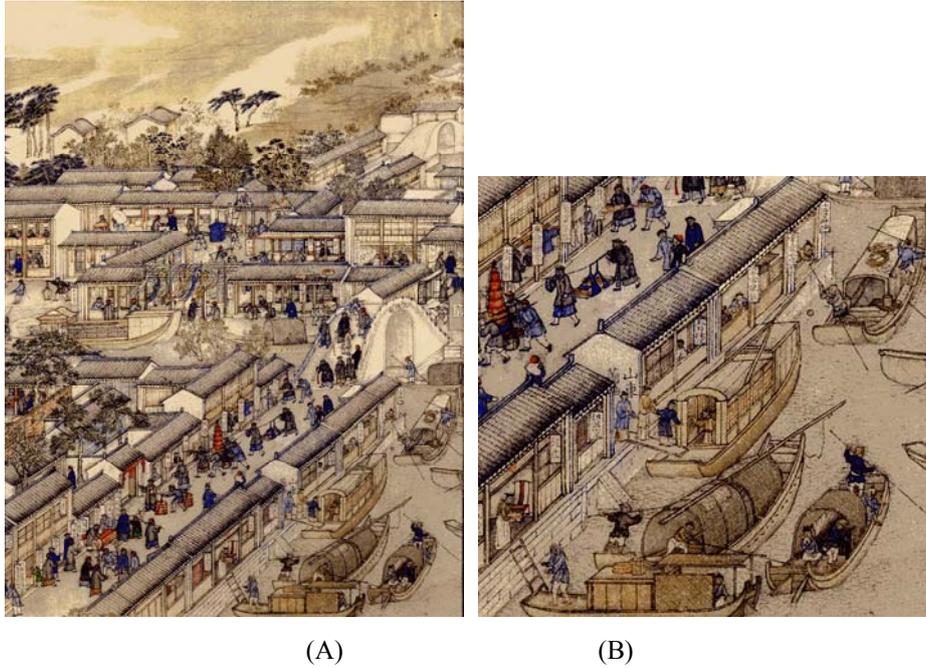


Figure 4.28. Xuyang, *Prosperous Suzhou*, 1759, 1225 x 35.8 cm, Liaoning Provincial Museum.

Without doubt, the boats in the above-mentioned Chinese paintings confirm the trustworthiness of the representations of the boats in the manuscript drawing, and this in turn buttresses the assumption that the depiction of the boat in pencil and chalk is based on direct observation. Nevertheless, the similarities between the representation in the Paris manuscript and Chinese pictorial material could suggest another possibility, as has been mentioned above, that the representation of these boats in the drawings may be inspired by Chinese pictorial material. Bearing this possibility in mind, I would like to analyse a much more detailed drawing of a Chinese dragon boat.

Different from the ordinary boats that often appear in the foreground of the cityscapes, the Chinese dragon boat aroused Nieuhof's interest so much

that he made it the main subject of a drawing and described it in the accompanying text, according to which he encountered this dragon boat at Shaobo:

We found lying about this village, in this royal channel, a great number of all manner of strange built vessels; but the most to be admired at were two barques or sloops, which by the Chinese are called Longschon, which signifies a serpent-boat.²⁵² These two vessels were built after a particular fashion, very curiously painted with all manner of colours, that they seemed much to exceed those boats which carry the fish from Nanking to Peking for the Emperor's use.

The mould or cast of this fair bottom was much like the form of our water-snake: the stern hung full of strange serpents, fastened with ribbons of several colours, which made a gallant show. At the stern of one of these vessels hung likewise two nimble boys,²⁵³ who played tricks and gambols to delight the spectators both above, and by diving under water. Upon the top of each mast, which were three in all, stood an idol, very curiously adorned with silk flags and pennons: in like manner stood on the poop an image dressed with ducks and drakes. The stern was also filled with standards, set out with tassels of hair, silk flags, and long feathers; the boat covered round with silk.

²⁵² *Longschon* or *Longschou* (龙船 or 龙舟); not the serpent boat but the dragon boat.

²⁵³ However, unlike the 1673 English translation of the first Dutch edition in 1665, there is only one boy in the text of the manuscript: "in de bocht van den steerdt hinge en jongen, die onder en boven water veel potsen bedreeff." See Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuwofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 45.

Under an upper high-raised desk, full of flags and standards, fat twelve lusty seamen, with gilt crowns upon their heads, clothed in silk, their arms naked; these were so dexterous at rowing, that the boat went at an extraordinary rate.²⁵⁴

According to the description, this dragon boat was used in the folk tradition of dragon boat races, which are traditionally held each year during the Duanwu Festival (also called “Dragon Boat Festival”) on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month.²⁵⁵ Echoing the description in the text, the shape of dragon boat in the corresponding drawing folio 109 (fig. 4.29) was first drawn in pencil and chalk. On closer observation, we find the pencil and chalk marks have designed the head of the dragon, the figure standing at the bow, the huge canopy in the middle, various flags floating in the wind, the poles at the stern and so forth. In another word, the depiction in pencil and chalk is quite detailed. Except for a pencil line above the canopy, the preliminary depictions in pencil and chalk were confirmed and refined by the later depiction in pen and watercolour. This suggests that Nieuhof was rather confident with the representation.

²⁵⁴ Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 83–84.

²⁵⁵ Nieuhof did not understand the significance of the *Duanwu jie*, and he confused it as “the feast of the new year on the new year day, being then also Full-Moon.” See *ibid.*, 83. In fact The *Duanwu Jie* is always held in June, and Chinese New Year falls in January or February, and the Full Moon (or Mid-Autumn) Festival in September or October.



Figure 4.29. Drawing folio 109 in the Paris manuscript.

This confidence is not groundless. Comparing it with Chinese pictorial material, we can see how closely the representation of the dragon boat in the drawing resembles representations in Chinese paintings and prints. For instance, the painting from the series entitled “The Emperor Yongzheng’s Pleasures during Twelve Months” (fig. 4.30) presents the dragon boats races sceneries during Duanwu Festival. The dragon boat in the middle of this painting is elaborately embellished with various Chinese traditional decorations, such as pennants, canopies and banners. It has many similarities with the dragon boat in the drawing, such as a burly figure standing at the bow; a long and narrow cabin amidships, outboard of which there are a number of crew; and colourful flags wave in the wind.



Figure 4.30. Unknown artist, “The Emperor Yongzheng’s Pleasures during Twelve Months,” colour on silk, 188.2 cm x 102.2 cm, the Qing Dynasty, Palace Museum, Beijing.

These similarities suggest that the depiction of Chinese dragon boat in the drawing faithfully records the details of an actual dragon boat and that Nieuhof’s drawing is based on direct observation; yet there may also be the possibility that the representation of the dragon boat in the drawing was inspired by Chinese pictorial material. In the following, I would like to briefly discuss the opportunities Nieuhof may have had to view Chinese pictorial material.

4.3 Potential access to Chinese pictorial material

Ever since he arrived in Canton, Nieuhof must have had many opportunities to view Chinese art. Although the Dutch ambassadors “were not permitted to go into the streets” during their six-month wait in Canton, they were lodged in a big hostel and were frequently invited by the viceroys

to their houses²⁵⁶ and during their journey to Peking they were “often invited and received amiable salutations” by local officials and governors in their residences.²⁵⁷ Moreover, they also visited many Chinese temples which were “very richly adorned with pictures and graven images.”²⁵⁸ Naturally, the Dutch visitors, especially Nieuhof, must have been impressed by such foreign and exotic art when they first encountered it, as we can see his description about the Viceroy’s house in Canton: “The galleries, courts, halls and other places of this court, were very artificially and curiously built, and most richly furnished with pictures, silk hangings and costly carpets.”²⁵⁹

Just as landscape paintings and prints were frequently found in the houses of middle-class Dutch families in the seventeenth century, paintings, especially landscapes, were one of the primary embellishments in the houses of Chinese literati. A good example can be found in the painting (fig. 4.31) of a reception hall of an official residence in the nineteenth century.²⁶⁰ It illustrates a courtyard of a typical Chinese house, as well as the furniture and interior decoration which Nieuhof would have probably seen in Canton. This scene consists of a hall, an open gallery, a garden, and part of the house compound. Landscape paintings are not only hung on the walls but are also attached to the lanterns. Considering the popularity of landscapes at that time, Nieuhof must have seen such artwork quite often, although they were probably considered fairly normal decorative materials. Moreover,

²⁵⁶ Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 39–42. In Canton, they had been invited to have dinner with the viceroys Shang Kexi and Geng Jizhong on several occasions.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁶⁰ This is one of the ten drawings that illustrate the interior of a Chinese official’s house in Canton. Although it is a work from the beginning of the nineteenth century, it still reflects the fundamental character of Chinese interior decoration. Opaque watercolour, British Library, shelf mark: Add.Or.2196.

commissioned to depict what he saw in China, Nieuhof would have been interested in and paid attention to Chinese art. Unfortunately, because of the lack of his original sketches, it is not possible to assess whether and to what extent Nieuhof copied or referred to such Chinese material.



Figure 4.31. A Canton artist, *House of a Chinese Official*, c.1800-05, British Library, Add.Or.2196.

Yet according to Nieuhof's account, it is certain that he had brought back some Chinese material with him when he returned back to Holland in 1658.²⁶¹ Although there are no exact references to the kinds of Chinese material he brought back, we can make some inferences from the example of Martinus Martini. When Martini returned to Europe from China in 1651, he brought more than fifty Chinese books and maps with him, and these turned out to be the essential source for the publication of his *Novus Atlas*

²⁶¹ Nieuhof, *Voyages & Travels to the East Indies 1653–1670*, 159.

Sinensis.²⁶² It is reasonable to suppose that Nieuhof would have collected similar pictorial material at temple fairs or markets for research, for his own work on China or just for interest.²⁶³ Considering their weight and volume, scroll paintings (hanging scrolls and hand scrolls), album paintings and prints would have been the documents of choice for Nieuhof to bring back to the Netherlands,²⁶⁴ and these could have served as reference materials as he went about reproducing the manuscript drawings.

In addition to Chinese material brought back by Nieuhof himself, Chinese paintings, drawings, prints and other commodities had been flowing into Europe via Macao since the sixteenth century and via Dutch traders from the first half of the seventeenth century.²⁶⁵ When regular trading relationships with Southeast Asia were established in the sixteenth century, Chinese paintings, among other commodities, already appeared in Europe, as they had been shown to King Manuel by Fernã Peres d'Andrade in 1520.²⁶⁶ Moreover, it is also known that Mendoza used Chinese paintings as sources for his discussion of Chinese sailing chariots.²⁶⁷ More important, the Dutch had been exposed to Chinese artistic motifs as captured in painted

²⁶² Dematte and Reed, *China on Paper*, 188.

²⁶³ Nieuhof probably toyed with the idea of publishing his own travel book, because he had prepared materials for his last journey in Brazil, which was later published; and with the flourishing development of the activities of the VOC abroad, publishing a travel account of a foreign country was very prevalent in his time.

²⁶⁴ The hand scroll or horizontal scroll ranges from less than three feet to more than thirteen feet in length, and the majority are between nine and fourteen inches high. The scene was normally viewed from right to left. The album was normally composed of the same continuous stretch of silk or paper and folded for convenient viewing and storage. It had been a popular format among the artists since the Southern Song period. For more details, see Jerome Silbergeld, *Chinese Painting Style: Media, Methods, and Principles of Form* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 12–13.

²⁶⁵ On the possibility that Dutch artists in the seventeenth century, such as Vermeer, had access to Chinese painting through Chinese exported goods, see Timothy Brook, *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 78–79.

²⁶⁶ Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. 2, bk. 1, *The Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 64.

²⁶⁷ See Lach, *The Century of Discovery*, 770–71.

porcelain, large quantities of which began being shipped from China to the Dutch market after 1600. T. Volker's 1954 study of the extant VOC bills of lading reveals that an estimated three million porcelain objects were shipped to Europe between 1604 and 1657.²⁶⁸ In addition to the trading activities of the VOC, Dutch merchants and others pursued private trade intensively, which suggests a broader path for the Chinese porcelain to flow into the Netherlands, probably of even finer quality, with more distinctive shapes and decorations. Chinese porcelain was so highly valued that it often appeared in the most extravagant type of Dutch still-life painting in the seventeenth century. Osias Beert's banquet painting (fig. 4.32) shows three blue-and-white porcelain bowls and plates containing pomegranates, olives, and cherries arranged on a wooden table. Chinese blue-and-white bowls from the centrepiece on the table, surrounded by wineglasses and a piece of bread, amid a sumptuous array of food. It is commented that "Chinese bowls, like the rare nautilus shell which can be found only in deep waters of the South Pacific and Indian Oceans, were treated as a precious curiosity and set in lavish gilt mounts by wealthy collectors."²⁶⁹ In fact, in seventeenth-century Dutch "laden-table" still lifes, Chinese blue-and-white porcelain was a popular subject for painters who gave it a central position to present the artist's taste and skills. Given these circumstances, Chinese porcelain was not unfamiliar to the person who produced the drawings of the Paris manuscript. Accordingly, when Nieuhof encountered difficulties with a rough sketch or lack of reliable sources, the representations of the

²⁶⁸ T. Volker, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company as Recorded in the Dagh-registers of Batavia Castle, Those of Hirado and Deshima and Other Contemporary Papers 1602–1682* (Leiden: Brill, 1954), 59.

²⁶⁹ For more knowledge about Chinese porcelain in Dutch paintings in the seventeenth century, see Julie Emerson, *Porcelain Stories: From China to Europe* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 2000), 102.

themes of landscapes, portraits and architecture on Chinese porcelain may have provided some inspiration.



Figure 4.32. Osias Beert, “Still Life with Cherries and Strawberries in Porcelain Bowls,” 50 x 65.5 cm, 1608. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

Besides these various approaches, books about and reports on China by Jesuit missionaries and secular travellers cannot be overlooked either. Before Nieuhof’s journey to China, some Jesuits and travellers had brought back to Europe reports containing illustrations relating to China. For instance pictures of China had appeared in Jan Huygen van Linschoten’s *Itinerario* and Martino Martini’s *Novus Atlas Sinensis*. Illustrations in these books provided sources from which Europeans could gain some knowledge of China. As most of them were published in Amsterdam, the publication centre of Europe in the seventeenth century, Nieuhof or at least his brother Hendrik who would later prepare the copper plates for the printed book could easily have come across these illustrations. With all these sources of

inspiration, even though Nieuhof had original sketches, the editor and publisher could get more impressions of Chinese cityscapes, architecture, people, and so forth, and these may have enriched his depictions of the fanciful country.

The drawings themed by Bao'en Temple (报恩寺, Temple for Paying a Debt of Gratitude) actually provide a good case for a further discussion of this complicated situation. The Bao'en Temple is located in Nanjing, on the south bank of the Yangtze River.²⁷⁰ It was constructed in the fifteenth century, but was mostly destroyed during the wars of the nineteenth century.²⁷¹ For many years before its destruction, the Bao'en pagoda was widely considered one of the architectural wonder of the world by foreign visitors, which encouraged the widespread belief, especially in the West, that it was typical of Chinese architecture.²⁷²

The drawing in the manuscript (fig. 4.33) displays a panoramic view of the temple. The depiction in pencil and chalk can be clearly seen in the structure and layout of the temple complex, the shape of the mountain in the background, and the position and appearance of Bao'en pagoda. It offers the reader a comprehensive impression of the temple. The greater part of this drawing is taken up by the temple complex and the magnificent Bao'en pagoda stands in the left middle of the complex. The complex consists of at least three courtyards, and walls, rows of halls, and side buildings surround them in shape of squares. The main entrance of the temple complex appears in the middle of the outer wall. In front of the entrance and the outer wall,

²⁷⁰ Luo, *Ancient Pagodas in China*, 68–70.

²⁷¹ The Bao'en pagoda had been built between 1415 and 1430 by the Yung-lo emperor to honour his mother. It was completely destroyed in the wars of the mid-nineteenth century. See Barry Till, *In Search of Old Nanking* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1982), 127–31.

²⁷² Robert L. Thorp, *Son of Heaven: Imperial Arts of China* (Seattle: Son of Heaven Press, 1988), 115.

are seen two rows of fences extending out from the side doors, a few evenly-spaced flagpoles, and several strange frameworks on the left.

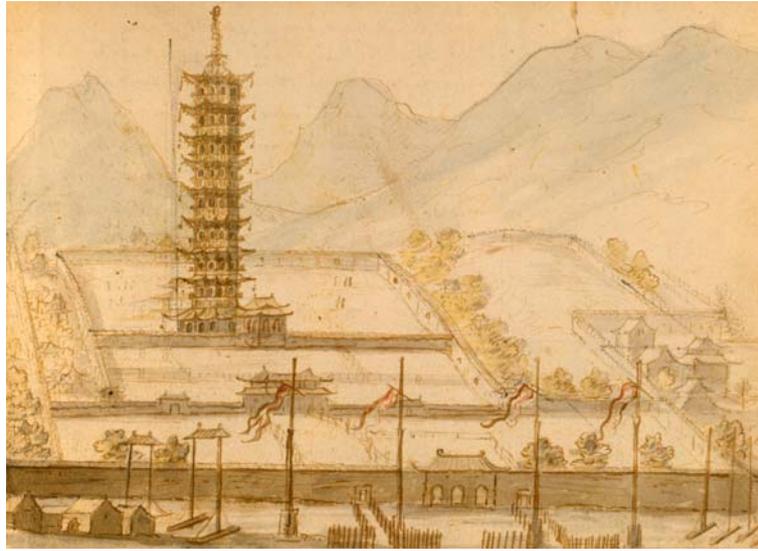


Figure 4.33. Drawing folio 95 in the Paris manuscript.

As elaborate as this depiction is, the temple is not comprehensively described in the accompanying text which reads, “The temple is decorated with various fine buildings, that are curious and of considerable age”.²⁷³ Moreover, the panoramic view seems to have been from a vantage point that Nieuhof is not likely to have seen when he and the other members of the VOC’s envoy visited the temple. Further doubt about this image comes from the manner in which the pagoda is represented, which in many respects deviates from Western pictorial principles. First, the individual components are not all observed from the same perspective as the temple complex as a whole. Judging from the surrounding walls, the temple complex is observed from the left, but the main entrance is apparently viewed from the front (the

²⁷³ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhoofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 43. The Dutch text is “Zij is versierd met verscheiden herlike gebouwen, die zoo wonderlik en antijx zijn.”

two gates at the rear are observed from the left), while the houses in the left-hand corner are observed from the right. Due to the disorder of observation angles, many of the structures including the main entrance and the side gates at the rear are quite flat and without any three-dimensional effect.

Second, the temple complex is not naturally situated in the mountains in the background; instead, it is more like two incompatible parts roughly thrown together to invent a scene. In respect to the shape and perspective of the mountains, as I have briefly discussed, they are reminiscent of the manner in which Chinese paintings and prints represent mountains. This also raises suspicions about the source of the depiction of the temple complex.

As one of the most outstanding sights in Nanjing, the Bao'en temple had been a popular theme in Chinese paintings and prints ever since it was built. The print (fig. 4.34) gives a bird's-eye view of the complex and clearly displays the same typically Chinese temple scene found in the drawing. At first sight, it obviously has much in common with the drawing of the Bao'en temple in the manuscript. Their similarities are revealed in many respects: the observing point, the whole structure, or the composition as a whole, or, again, the details of the pagoda, the entrance, and even the specific elements in front of the outer wall, the fence and the "framework." Based on such amazing similarities of detail, it is not unreasonable to speculate that the drawing in the manuscript was copied from this Chinese print. It is even possible that Nieuhof obtained this print when he was in Nanjing, brought it back to the Netherlands, and used it for the reproduction of the manuscript. Then, even if Nieuhof was unable to make sketches of the

Bao'en temple on site, he still could have made a reliable representation on the basis of the Chinese print.

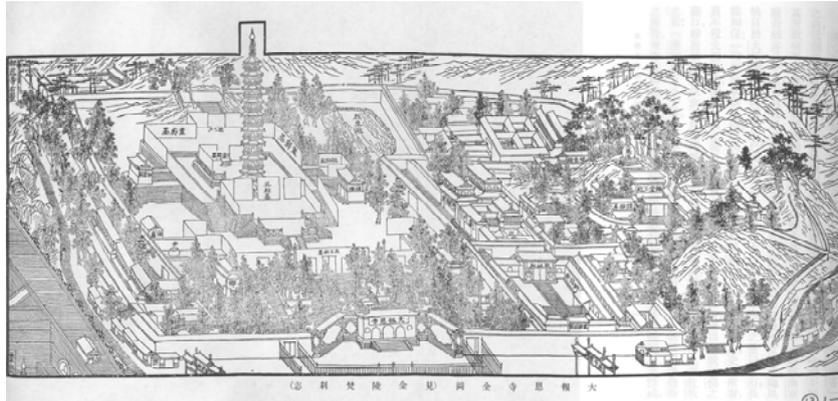


Figure 4.34. Chinese print of the Bao'en Temple, 17th century.

Conclusion

So far, the relatively detailed and specific depictions in pencil and chalk have been analysed in ways that allow us to make sense of the rougher depictions in Nieuhof's drawings, particularly the preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk that appear in these reproduced drawings. It is noteworthy that these pencil-and-chalk details appear mainly in the drawings on the theme of Chinese figures, Chinese boats, Chinese rockeries, and so on. Comparisons with Chinese materials show that, on the one hand, these depictions, largely reflect the primary characteristics of what they represent and could have been produced by Nieuhof on the basis of direct observation. On the other hand, it has to be acknowledged that the images rendered in pencil and chalk are fairly generic and coarse, and this may be attributed to Nieuhof's lack of formal training.

Similarities between the drawings and Chinese traditional pictorial material suggest the possibility that Chinese pictorial material brought back

by Nieuhof or others during the seventeenth century may have provided some inspiration for the reproduction of the drawings in the Paris manuscript. In this sense, the characteristic “direct observation” of the depiction in pencil and chalk could be closely related to Chinese pictorial material, which would make it more challenging to interpret. Normally, “direct observation” means that the artist viewed the thing itself in person and drew it at that time. But in the seventeenth century, Europeans’ visual impressions of China derived mainly from the decorations and illustrations on Chinese export objects, and “direct observation” was not limited to eyewitness observations of the actual scene. That is to say, the “direct observation” of Chinese scenes and people might also derive from secondary sources, namely, representations of China by Chinese and European artists.

Chapter 5 The Refined Representations of China

5.1 An examination of the representation of Chinese cityscape

Nieuhof was deeply impressed by Chinese cities during his journey in China, about which he wrote, “What concerns the idol temples, courts, and palaces of great lords, and other rare edifices, which are to be seen here [China], there is no city in all Asia that shows the like.”²⁷⁴ Therefore, he made many drawings representing Chinese cityscapes in the Paris manuscript and they often consisted of city gate, city wall, pagoda, and so forth. However, many drawings of Chinese cityscapes and landscapes have only the most rudimentary preliminary depictions in pencil.

The cityscape of Canton is a good example. The Dutch envoys were required to stay in Canton for about six months while awaiting an official response to their request to visit the Chinese emperor. During this time, they were frequently invited by and generously treated by Chinese officials in Canton.²⁷⁵ Obviously, Nieuhof would have had more than enough opportunity to observe this city and its people, which is probably why he describes it in greater detail than he does any other.²⁷⁶ He may have drawn some of his information about the city’s topography and history from Martini’s *Novus Atlas Sinensis*, but his detailed account of the appearance of the city is apparently based on an eyewitness observation. Here I quote some of his descriptions of Canton in the printed book:

²⁷⁴ Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 37.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 36–47.

For three miles upon this river (*Ta*) is the city of Canton walled in, and some places adorned with rich and populous suburbs. . . . On the water side the city is defended with two rows of high and thick walls, which are strengthened with bulwarks, watchtowers, and other forts; and beside these works there are two other strong water castles, which being built in the middle of the river, render this city invincible . . . the city is likewise defended and surrounded on the land side with a strong wall, and five strong castles, whereof some are within the walls, and others without upon the tops of steep hills . . . what concerns the idol temples, courts, and palaces of great lords, and other rare edifices, which are to be seen here, there is no city in all Asia that shows the like.²⁷⁷

This comprehensive description suggests that Nieuwhof was rather familiar with the city and he must have been to many places of Canton. Many details described in the text have been visualized in the corresponding drawing (see figure 4.27). As shown in this drawing, the city is located on the riverbank and surrounded with populous suburbs; furthermore, most of the extraordinary buildings can be easily discovered and identified, for instance, the castles built on the top of steep hills, the city wall, the watchtower and the idol temple. The foreground is taken up by water, on which we can see various Chinese boats. In respect to the process by which this cityscape was rendered, it is noteworthy that several horizontal lines have been drawn in chalk and pencil at the place where the silhouette of the

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 36–37.

town appears. As a preliminary sketch for the final pen depiction, these lines make a horizontal division in the composition of the cityscape. That is to say, they are used for settling the composition, prior to the application of the depiction in pen and the watercolour. With this compositional arrangement, the city lies next to a wide body of water and the city wall stretches over the image, dividing the water in the foreground from the settlements and mountains in the background. Accordingly, the portrait of the city is mainly a profile viewed from afar across an expanse of water and shows not only the profile of the city and its distinctive skyline, but also records its topographical features. This is understandable because the route taken by the Dutch embassy from Canton to Peking was mainly by river and along the Grand Canal, and consequently, most of the cities along their way were located on the water.²⁷⁸

But it is quite a complicated situation for many other cityscapes, in which the preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk is very rough. As already noted in the discussion of the cityscape of Nan'an, the refinement in pen and watercolor has quite a different intention from the preliminary sketch in pencil and chalk. In most cases, the preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk is generic and unspecific and the cityscapes are revealed mainly in pen and watercolour. The drawing in folio 130 (fig. 5.1) offers a typical example showing how the preliminary depiction in pencil and chalk and later refinement in pen and watercolour make a cityscape. A curved line in chalk is visible in the foreground and this was later rendered in pen and

²⁷⁸ The Grand Canal, also known as the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal (京杭大运河), is the longest ancient canal or artificial river in the world. Beginning in Beijing, it passes through Tianjin and the provinces of Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu and Zhejiang to the city of Hangzhou. The oldest parts of the canal date back to the fifth century BC. The total length of the Grand Canal is roughly 1,770 km (1,114 miles). See Yao Hanyuan, *A History of the Grand Canal* (京杭运河史) (Beijing: China Water & Power Press, 1998).

watercolour as a small mound. From the point where the trees appear in the middle distance another horizontal line in chalk is weakly sketched. As there is no further improvement of it in pen and watercolour, it is hard to tell what this rough line is meant to show. Moreover, a wavy line in chalk runs diagonally across the right middle ground. Its shape alone gives no clue as to what it represents, but the later depiction in pen and watercolour makes it a bridge. Similarly, a coarse circle depicted in chalk appears atop the city wall. Again, the shape is too generic to tell what it might be, although the later refinement in pen and watercolour turns it into a magnificent Chinese building with several layers of upturned eaves. Nonetheless, its shape and position do look like a watchtower atop the city wall.

This situation is very common in most of Nieuhof's cityscapes: coarse pencil-and-chalk markings atop a city wall or horizontal lines across a cityscape are too generic to offer specific information about the intention of the initial design, and the final phase mainly depends on the depiction in pen. This means Nieuhof may not have added details to sketches supposedly made on the spot in China, and so needed to recompose the cityscapes of China when he produced the Paris manuscript. This raises the question of how the representations of Chinese cityscapes are produced and to what extent they reflect the "na het leven" quality?



Figure 5.1. Drawing folio 130 in the Paris manuscript.

Regarding the “na het leven” quality of the cityscapes, we have to keep in mind why the VOC commissioned Nieuwhof to make pictures of China in “their correct shape and appearance” in the first place. Although it was supposed to be a purely diplomatic visit, the VOC still desired to discover information about the Chinese economy and the Chinese people’s way of life in order to size up China as a potential market. According to Pieter van Dam, the VOC also sent secret instructions to the ambassadors: they were to negotiate with Chinese authorities to provide naval support that could be used to fight against Zheng Chenggong’s fleet, in exchange for which they hoped that privileges would be granted to the Company.²⁷⁹ In view of the

²⁷⁹ These instructions can be seen in Dam and Stapel, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, vol. 1, bk.2, 703. The Dutch text read, “dat wy haar te water tegens den mandorijn Coksinja [...] met onse schepen en volk quamen te assisteeren en hem van die kant soodanigh sogten te benaeuwen, dat hy in der Tartaren handen quam te vervallen, en wat voorregten sy ons daarvoor wel soudent willen laten genieten, om daarover in Peking nader te handelen, sodert evenwel aan’t hof te laten blyken onse genegentheyt tot hetselve, mits dat de kosten, dewelke soude vereysschen daartoe gedaan te worden, ons soudent mogen warden vergoedt, of anderssiints by het verkrygen van den handel ons te doen

VOC's earlier dealings with the Japanese government and the king of Siam, there was nothing new about giving assistance in exchange of trading privileges.

In respect to the accuracy of these cityscapes in the Paris manuscript, a positive answer is given by Ulrichs, who writes: "The cityscapes document the embassy's journey from Canton to Peking on Chinese rivers and canals, and are topographically fairly correct. Even today, the existence and location of prominent buildings, like pagodas, can be traced by means of city maps."²⁸⁰

In my opinion, however, this conclusion is too rash. First of all, most of the buildings in the cityscapes of the Paris manuscript are not specific enough to be recognized in real life. Second, it is true that the majority of Chinese cities, villages, and sites that the VOC envoys passed along their way were observed from canals, which influenced the positional relationship between Nieuhof and the cities he depicted. That is to say, the composition not only shows the profile of the city and its distinctive skyline, but also records the topographical features of the city. But the cityscapes' topographical features can hardly be considered accurate when compared with Chinese traditional maps.

Generally speaking, the relationship between the city and the canal in the cityscapes of the Paris manuscript can be divided into two basic layouts. In the first, the city and mountains are horizontally located in the background and the water (canal) occupies the whole foreground. This means the canal runs parallel to or around the city. In the second kind of layout, the water (canal) is also depicted in the foreground of the drawing,

hebben vrydom van alle tollen en gerechtigheeden." It has been discussed in Kops, "Not Such an 'Unpromising Beginning': The First Dutch Trade Embassy to China, 1655–1657," 546.

²⁸⁰ Ulrichs, *Johan Nieuhofs Blick auf China (1655–1657)*, 154.

but its direction is perpendicular to the city, which means it flows towards or through the city. Cityscapes depicted in the second type of layout carry more specific information about the topographical features of the city. This pattern has been exercised in a number of cityscapes. For example, in the drawing folio 153 of the town of Jinghai (静海, fig. 5.2), a river flows from the foreground towards the city wall in the background. However, the accompanying text states that “the little town of Jinghai is situated on the left side of the Canal²⁸¹ [...] beautiful suburbs grow on the banks on either side.”²⁸² According to the text, Jinghai should be located on the left side of the Grand Canal, which means the river would be flowing next to the town rather than through it. When examining the positional relationship between the canal and the city, it may be impractical to use the current site as a reference, since the terrain features may have changed in the last several hundred years, but the Qing Dynasty *Zhi He Quan Shu* (Chinese waterways atlas, 治河全书) should provide a convincing point of reference.²⁸³

²⁸¹ The “Canal” should be the Grand Canal, and the city of Jinghai was actually located on the right side of the Canal.

²⁸² See Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 49. The Dutch text is, “Denzelven ditto voeren voorbij Singleichen (Jinghai), een klein steden, liggende 80 lij van Sinko aan dezelve kant van’t water. ’t Heeft een schoone voorstadt aan beide zijden der reviere en vele volk.”

²⁸³ Zhang Pengyu (张鹏翮), *Chinese Waterways Atlas (治河全书)* (Tianjin: Tianjin Ancient Books Publishing House, 2008).



Figure 5.2. Drawing folio 153 in the Paris manuscript.

This atlas was submitted to the Emperor Kangxi in 1703 by a governor who was in charge of the construction, maintenance, and conservation of the Yellow River, the Grand Canal, the Huai Hai, and the other major rivers in China. As an officially submitted document, this atlas was made with a view to recording the location of the rivers of China, and naturally it contained a great number of paintings of these rivers, and in particular the Grand Canal. Although these paintings are depicted in the Chinese manner, which lacks perspective, three-dimensional effects, and other techniques, they reflect the essential topographical characteristics of the actual place. More important, as these paintings were to serve as the basis for the management of the rivers, special attention had to be paid to the topographical characteristics of the river. Therefore, the maps in this atlas should be able to provide information for the examination of the topographical characteristics presented in the cityscape drawings.

As shown in figure 5.3, the section of Jinghai in the Chinese map presents a different topographical characteristic of this town from the drawing; the Grand Canal clearly flows alongside rather than through the city. Imagining that Nieuhof was on the boat sailing along the Grand Canal and passing through this town, his observation point should be from the boat. Therefore, the compositional arrangement in this drawing, which shows that the river flows towards the town in the background, does not match the topographical feature of the actual place.

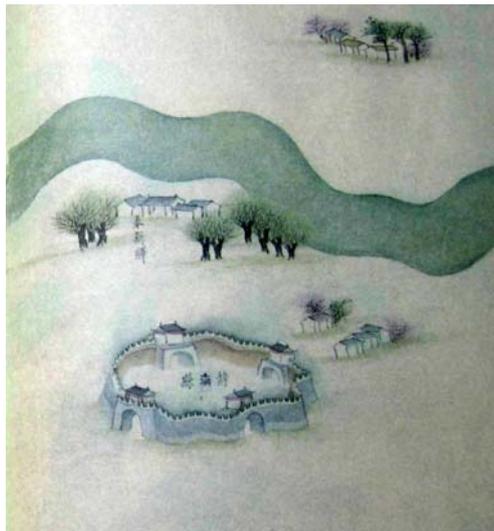


Figure 5.3. Map of the town of Jinghai in the *Zhi He Quan Shu* (Chinese waterways atlas), 1703.

Another good example is the drawing folio 151 which is supposed to represent the town of Qingxian (青县, fig. 5.4). According to the description in the accompanying text, Qingxian is “located on the left side of the canal; here, the canal connects with a branch of the Yellow River, so the expanse of water is very broad. Close by the riverside stands a badly maintained

ancient tower.”²⁸⁴ This description matches the representation in the map of Qingxian in the atlas *Chinese Waterways Atlas* in great and accurate details. This map (fig. 5.5) shows the Grand Canal and above it a branch of the Yellow River. Considering that the embassy group was travelling from southern China to Peking, their direction on this map would have been from left to right, and Qingxian would have been on “the left side of the canal.” Further down, a building complex appears in the map. According to the accompanying inscription, this temple is the Wen Miao (Temple of Literature) and the pagoda is the Kuixing Lou (Tower of Literature). This also echoes the description in the text, which says that an ancient tower stands on the bank and many statues are exposed to the open air.



Figure 5.4. Drawing folio 151 in the Paris manuscript.

²⁸⁴ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 48. “Den 4 ditto, passerden wij met goeden voorspoedt het stedeke Sinkoheen, liggende 120 lij van Suntecien an de slinke zij van de Koninglike Vaart, die haar alhier met een arm van de Gele Revier vermengt en onverzulk wijd en breedtt overloopt. Dicht op de kant van ’t water statt een antijkse pagoda, maar werd slordig onderhouden.”

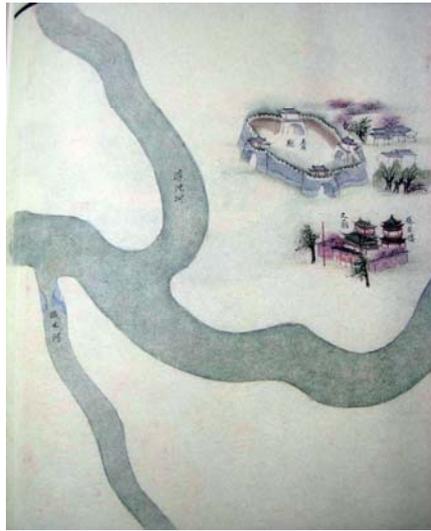


Figure 5.5. Map of the town of Qingxian in *Zhi He Quan Shu* (Chinese waterways atlas), 1703.

Nonetheless, when comparing the drawing with the map, it is evident that neither the temple nor the tower is visible on the bank. In this drawing, the town of Qingxian is arranged in a simple diagonal composition so that the river flows from the left foreground and ends at the right in the middle distance where the city emerges. Being blocked by the knoll in the right side of the foreground, the ultimate direction of the river is unknown; it could either flow through the city or flow around the city wall. Yet, a comparison with the depiction of the town in the Chinese map shows both assumptions to be wrong. First, there is no such river flowing towards the city; second, if the river was flowing around the city, the knoll should not emerge in the right foreground. The bank seems to be an imaginary invention to assist the structural arrangement.

In the Paris manuscript, there is also a rather peculiar drawing positioned next to the cityscape of Canton. It shows up right after the

already earlier quoted description of the destruction of Canton. The accompanying text reads: “On the picture we see the village of Fosan, with a large *dangpu* or fortified pawnshop sticking out high above the surrounding housing.”²⁸⁵ This drawing folio 29 (fig. 5.6) provides another example of a composition showing a river and city. It is similar to the above example, while the foreground takes up almost half the picture and a broad river is located in the middle with banks on either side. This depicts “the famous village of Foshan,” the well-known centre of industry north of Canton, a large township that was not surrounded by city walls. The scene seems very strange, especially considering the tightly packed houses in the background and the weird compositional relationship between the river and the houses located by the water. The river probably takes a turn upon entering the township, and the scene is reminiscent of the watery landscape in the northern Netherlands, so well known to Nieuhof, where one often observes exactly the same situation when a ship sails into a riverside town or village. It looks as if one will sail right into houses but inside the village the river takes a turn and thus creates this *trompe l’oeil* effect.

²⁸⁵ In this particular region many pawnshops are located in fortified edifices to keep off robbers.



Figure 5.6. Drawing folio 29 in the Paris manuscript.

5.2 The refinement of the representation of Chinese cityscape based on Dutch pictorial convention

The mis-presentation of the actual topographical situation was quite common for Dutch artists of the seventeenth century who sought to make their landscape paintings and prints look natural. One interesting example is the townscape of Leiden (fig. 5.7) by Jan van Goyen. In this painting, we see a diagonal section of the riverbank with a few figures in the left foreground, a broad river traversing the picture horizontally, the buildings including a magnificent church standing on the other bank and the heavy clouds covering most of the sky. Such a composition was very familiar to Dutch viewers in the seventeenth century and the buildings, especially the famous Hooglandse Kerk or St. Pancras Church, could be readily identified, thus giving the impression that this cityscape was made “na het leven”. However, closer observation will reveal that the artist has placed Leiden’s famous St. Pancras Church alongside a wide, winding, and imaginary

river.²⁸⁶ In fact, in this painting, the artist has tried to create a reality, as Anthony Bailey says of Vermeer, “whose bits and pieces can be disputed in terms of factual truth but whose artistic ‘rightness’ is overwhelming.”²⁸⁷ Therefore, the practice of selecting some landmarks and inserting them into the wide context of the Dutch countryside, is actually a very common approach among seventeenth-century Dutch artists who sought to make drawings and paintings of cityscapes look natural. In other words, a natural-looking landscape in the seventeenth century did not require an artist to record a scene as faithfully as a photograph, but to select some landmark buildings and to put them into a harmonious composition. The process of selecting objects and arranging the composition mainly reflected the second characteristic of “naar het leven,” namely, to make them look natural.



Figure 5.7. Jan van Goyen, “View of Leiden,” 1643. 39.8 x 59.9 cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

²⁸⁶ It has been discussed by Peter Sutton, see Sutton and Blankert, *Masters of 17th-century Dutch Landscape Painting*, 96–97.

²⁸⁷ See Anthony Bailey, *A View of Delft: Vermeer Then and Now* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2001), 110.

Nieuhof must have known certain conventions of how to sketch. In the process of making cityscapes of China, he had to consider at least two factors: the composition and the individual elements in the drawings. It is important to first ascertain the patterns used to compose the elements into an image. Although the composition in some cityscapes is complicated because they share characteristics of low horizontal landscapes, diagonal river courses, vertical framing trees, and some horizontal elements, they can still be categorized by their most prominent characteristic. Generally speaking, two kinds of patterns, the horizontal and the diagonal, are frequently used to arrange the mountains, city walls, and rivers, to compose Chinese cityscapes. The following part further investigates these two patterns and explores their relationship with seventeenth-century Dutch landscape and cityscape paintings and prints.

The horizontal composition

In many cityscapes in the Paris manuscript, the city lies next to a wide body of water and the city wall stretches horizontally across the image, dividing the water in the foreground from the settlements and mountains in the background. Accordingly, the portrait of the city is mainly a profile viewed across the water from afar. This is understandable because the route taken by the VOC's envoy from Canton to Peking was mainly by water, and consequently most of the cities along the way were located on the bank of a river or canal. For instance, in the drawing folio 84 of the town of Tongling (see fig. 4.23), a horizontal line in the middle of the image separates the water and land. The foreground is taken up by water and a magnificent boat floating on the river in the left corner of the image. The city profile is depicted in a narrow scale in the middle against a blank sky that stretches over two-thirds of the image.

This composition recalls the very common arrangement of seventeenth-century Dutch cityscapes such as the painting “View of Zierikzee” by Esajas van de Velde (fig. 5.8), which shares the same compositional arrangement. One can readily see that except for the clouds occupying the sky, and the riverbank and some fishermen in the foreground, the composition is essentially the same as that of the cityscape of Tongling. Both show the town’s silhouette in the background in a linear pattern, while the city profile extends along the riverbank and the river takes up one-third of the picture.



Figure 5.8. Esaias van de velde, “View of Zierikzee,” 1618, 27 x 40 cm, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Nevertheless, there is another essential difference between these two images. To a large extent, Van de Velde’s painting follows the cartographical tradition of showing the distinctive landmarks, such as the church, the city hall as well as and the surroundings, all of which make the city recognizable. However, in the drawing of the town of Tongling, the city

profile is treated roughly and vaguely. Some buildings are visible, such as the two-tiered, pillar-like building as well as several buildings with typically Chinese up-turned eaves, but these architectural features can hardly be used to identify the town, particularly considering that buildings of the same shape are scattered elsewhere in the drawing. It would not be surprising if Nieuwhof had put a magnificent Chinese boat in the foreground to make up for this rather plain cityscape and distract the viewer's attention from this uninteresting heap of buildings.

The compositional pattern of three superimposed zones (foreground-water-city) was skilfully integrated in a scheme by the contemporary Dutch artists in the representation of foreign lands through which they travelled by water. The painting "View of Itamaracá Island in Brazil" by Frans Post (fig. 5.9) is a good example.²⁸⁸ In this painting, the low island of Itamaracá is observed from the riverbank. A number of regional buildings can be seen on top of the hills. On the riverbank are a European on horseback and another man who stands on the ground and waves to somebody on the opposite bank, possibly calling for the ferry. Two African servants stand beside them holding the reins and carrying fruit. It is known that Post painted a great number of Brazilian landscapes after he returned to Holland in 1646 on the basis of the drawings he made in Brazil, but this particular piece is one of the seven paintings he painted while he was still in Brazil.²⁸⁹ Compared with the landscapes executed in his studio in Holland, this landscape seems less embellished and more faithful to what he had actually observed. To sum up, as simple as it is, this pattern of

²⁸⁸ Many of his drawings were based on a large number of drawings that he made during journeys. See Wolfgang Stechow, *Dutch Landscape Painting of the Seventeenth Century* (1968; repr. Oxford: Phaidon, 1981), 167–169.

²⁸⁹ Peter C. Sutton, *Dutch & Flemish Paintings: The Collection of Willem Baron van Dedem* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2002), 186–89.

composition is very effective for the artist to make a topographical sketch of a foreign place during his journey.



Figure 5.9. Frans Post, “View of Itamaracà Island in Brazil,” 1637, 63.5 x 88.5 cm, Mauritshuis, The Hague.

Furthermore, this way of depicting landscapes has also been applied, with some modification, to contemporary townscapes as well. For instance, in the drawing folio 99 (fig. 5.10), the town of Yizheng seems to have been observed from a very low, distant vantage point. The sky and water stretch across the foreground and background to leave an almost indistinguishable town profile. Such a specific and extreme representation of horizontal composition can also be found in the atmospheric painting, “View of Hoorn” by Abraham de Verwer (fig. 5.11). Other than the sailing ships in the foreground in the painting, these two cityscapes look practically identical in almost every respect, including the numerous masts in De Verwer’s painting, but unexpectedly emerge from among the houses of the town of

Yizheng. Moreover, if the Chinese pagoda and some Chinese-style houses were replaced with churches and other Dutch architectural features, it would be hard to distinguish the Chinese cityscape and the Dutch cityscape with the same composition arrangement.



Figure 5.10. Drawing folio 99 in the Paris manuscript.



Figure 5.11. Abraham de Verwer, “View of Hoorn,” c.1645, 51.5 x 95 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The diagonal composition

In addition to the horizontal pattern, a number of cityscapes are represented in a diagonal composition. In the drawing folio 49 (fig. 5.12), for instance, the upper diagonal is formed by the top line of a succession of mountains from the upper right corner to the lower left; the middle diagonal line is drawn along the city wall from the upper left to the lower right; and the lower one joins the upper one in the distance on the left and runs down the road towards the lower right corner. This triple diagonal pattern actually reminds me a print of Esaias van de Velde, “The Country Road” (fig. 5.13). Comparing these two pictures, we find that in the drawing the trees are replaced by the continuous mountains and the fence is replaced by the typical city wall, while the carriages change into the ruins of vernacular dwellings. But here, it is noteworthy that the ruins of dwellings are very likely to have been seen by Nieuhof on his journey, so they were probably depicted on basis of direct observation.



Figure 5.12. Drawing folio 49 in the Paris manuscript.



Figure 5.13. Esajas van de Velde, “Country Road,” 1616, Frankfurt, Sadelshes Kunstinstitut.

There are also cases where the diagonal pattern is somewhat altered, by a knoll lying in the right corner, or by juxtaposition with a horizontal line in the background. For instance, in the drawing folio 122 showing the town of Jining (济宁, fig. 5.14), the “double diagonal” formed by the river and the bank is compromised by a straight city wall in the background. Even for such a specific alteration, a similar composition can be easily found in contemporary Dutch paintings, such as the “Grainfields” by Jacob van Ruisdael (fig. 5.15). Folio 122 resembles this painting from the point of view of its composition: in the cityscape of Jining, the left diagonal is a river instead of a road; the Dutch windmill is replaced by typical Chinese architecture; and in place of Dutch houses in the far background we discern a city wall.



Figure 5.14. Drawing folio 122 in the Paris manuscript.



Figure 5.15. Jacob van Ruisdael, "Grainfields," 1665-68, 47 x 57 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The great similarities between the compositional patterns in the drawings in the Paris manuscript and those in seventeenth-century Dutch pictorial material strongly suggest that when producing the drawings, Nieuhof followed certain conventions of contemporary Dutch landscape composition. Whether he did so to overcome the difficulties he encountered with the rough sketches he had made in China, or whether he had sketched them like that on the spot remains unclear. Naturally, by adopting commonly-used devices of landscape composition, the aesthetic effect and harmony of the drawings of Chinese cityscapes would be ensured. To make them look natural, Nieuhof also needed to consider the arrangement of the components of these cityscapes—mountain, city wall, city gate, and so forth. The representation of these components was based to a large extent on direct observation, but the individual elements do not necessarily always appear in the proper place, just as in the case of Jan van Goyen's painting.

The representation of mountains in the background may give us some clues about how Nieuhof dealt with these components. Of the sixty-three cityscape drawings, at least eighteen are embellished with mountains or hills in the background.²⁹⁰ Considering the fancy shape and magnificent size they possess, these mountains and hills were without doubt worth noting. As I have discussed previously, the depiction in chalk and pencil provided an outline for the continuous mountains in the background of the drawing of Bao'en Temple (see fig. 4.33), and lines of mountains appear in many other drawings, for instance, in the drawing folio 66 which is supposed to represent the townscape of the town of Xinxing (fig. 5.16). Here the mountains with seven strange peaks in the background resemble the

²⁹⁰ The last but one drawing with mountains as background is the representation of Batavia and is not included in this group.

mountains in the background of the drawing of the Bao'en temple: in both drawings, the first mountain peak from the right takes up the dominant space; the second, third and fourth peaks from the right also have a fairly jagged shape; the second peak from the left is relatively unassuming. Yet the mountains in this pattern appear repeatedly in the background of the drawings in folios 43, 46, 49, 74, and 78. Clearly, Nieuhof liked the general shape of these mountains, which is why the pattern appears over and over again in other cityscape drawings, even though it is always somewhat altered by adding or reducing one or two peaks.

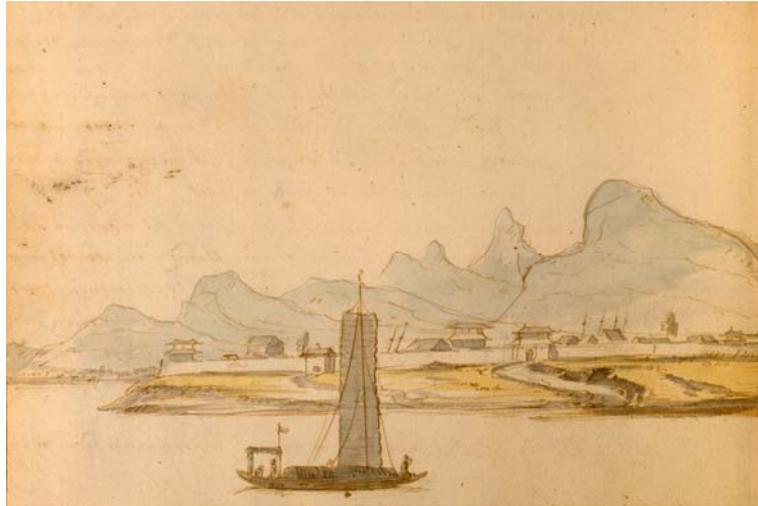


Figure 5.16. Drawing folio 66 in the Paris manuscript.

Thus, even though the depiction of the mountains in this pattern is based on direct observation, its recurrence in different drawings makes us doubt their actual shape. With this hilly pattern in the background, the cityscapes always look the same: a range of various lofty peaks constitute continuous mountains or hills in the background, and their jagged and twisting ridges form a strong contrast to the horizontal foreground which is

usually a straight city wall or quiet river. This is understandable as the purpose of showing them in the background has more to do with the harmony of the whole composition than with “na het leven” representation.

Sometimes the components of the cityscape are randomly placed within a certain composition, as for instance in the drawing of the town of Fengcheng (丰城) in folio 67 (fig. 5.17). The generic contour of the city wall is depicted in pencil and chalk before the depiction is refined and other details—the roofs above the city wall, the riverbank, and the boats—are added in pen and ink. Embellished with an attractive Chinese vessel on the water and a typical city wall, this image conveys the feeling of a Chinese town until we take a closer look at the two oddly shaped buildings in front of the city wall. Their shape suggests that they may be city gates, but this speculation is contradicted by their location, because Chinese city gates are invariably attached to the city wall and do not stand apart outside of the wall. What, then, are these two buildings?



Figure 5.17. Drawing folio 67 in the Paris manuscript.

The accompanying text about this drawing shed some light on their identity: “On the north side of the city is a populous suburb, well and close built with buildings. There are also two great and high triumphal arches, which had been much defaced with the rest of the brave structures in the last bloody invasion.”²⁹¹

This description indicates the existence of two great buildings, which is probably the reason why Nieuhof has arranged two buildings on the bank. These two buildings are supposed to be “Chinese great and high triumphal arches.” However, their form does not resemble the Chinese traditional arch, an example of which is shown in figure 5.18. Therefore, these hastily-drawn, almost symbolic figures do not have the form of a Chinese arch, nor are they properly positioned as city gates.



Figure 5.18. Photograph of a typical Chinese arch in Canton.

²⁹¹ Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 62.

There are many other cases in which Nieuhof's ink-and-watercolor refinements of Chinese cityscapes show more concern for creating an illusion or impression of China than for presenting an accurate representation of what China actually looked like. Folio 58, the drawing of the town of Taihe (泰和, see figure 5.19) provides a more typical example. The town profile consists of a city gate, a gate tower, a pagoda, and other buildings with up-turned eaves, a feature typical of Chinese architecture. With these elements, this townscape in China seems fairly reliable, and the figure holding an umbrella and walking along the narrow path create an environment of human activity and lend the impression that this scene is made from life. However, the two buildings standing on the left side of the city wall cast a shadow on this impression. Their position suggests that they are watchtowers on the city wall, but their shape more closely resembles city gates. Obviously, placing city gates on the top of the city wall does not make much sense in reality. The lack of specificity of these cityscapes may be attributed to two factors. First, as noted above, Nieuhof may not have created many detailed sketches on site as he floated by during his journey in China. Second, at that time, readers would not have been able to judge the credibility of these cityscapes because they had never had the opportunity to see China with their own eyes and there was little other visual material with which to compare Nieuhof's work.

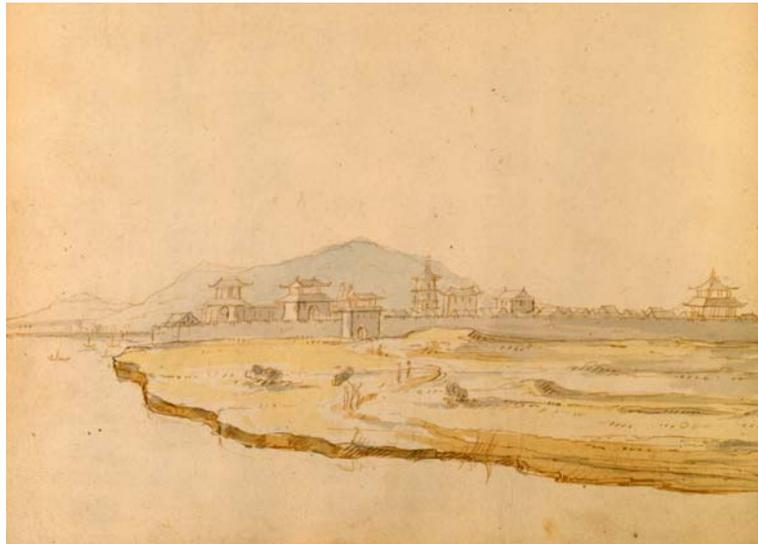


Figure 5.19. Drawing folio 58 in the Paris manuscript.

Another important approach employed by Nieuhof to make representations of China look natural was to embrace Chinese motifs in western settings. For instance, in the drawing folio 134 (see figure 4.8), the representation of the statue Guan-Yin, the impressive column not only provides a reference about the size of the statue, but also conveys a rough idea of what the interior of the Chinese temple looks like. However, his depiction yields a space that seems more European than Chinese. In fact, the appearance and position of this column are reminiscent of contemporary paintings of Dutch church interiors. For instance, the columns in the painting “Interior of the Oude Kerk, Delft” by Gerard Houckgeest (1600–1661) in 1651 (fig. 5.20) are similar in shape to the column depicted in Nieuhof’s drawing. Moreover, in Houckgeest’s painting, the column is a central component of the setting. One consequence of Nieuhof’s arrangement is that a Chinese statue of Guan-Yin seems to have been transplanted to an interior resembling a Dutch church. As it is quite common

for a column to appear prominently in paintings of Dutch churches, this would have created an air of familiarity rather than doubt for the intended audience.



Figure 5.20. Gerard Houckgeest, "Interior of the Oude Kerk, Delft," 1651, 49 x 41 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

5.3 The refinement partly based on direct observation

Nieuhof's drawings are seemingly based on direct observation, but his refinements with pen and ink give a more plausible, natural effect. The drawing representing the occasion when the Dutch envoys were granted an audience by the Shunzhi Emperor (r. 1644–61) in the Forbidden City is a good example. This drawing (fig. 5.21) emphasizes the powerful symmetrical compositional design of the Forbidden City, which is depicted as a complex with a large, fabulous building in the middle flanked by two

rows of buildings. In the central courtyard, a group of people kneel on the ground facing the main building while other people stand on either side in front of the row the buildings.²⁹² This matches the description of this occasion in the accompanying text, which reads as follows:

On the first day of October, the ambassadors received the summons to attend an audience with Chinese Emperor, so the Pinkstintou and two officials from Canton and some other people arrived at the lodgings very early to accompany the ambassadors. [...] We were placed in the second courtyard on the left side where the ambassadors waited till daylight. [...] In front, on either side of a high gate stood three heavy elephants, which had been elaboratedly decorated and loaded with gilded towers; because the throng was so vast, we could see no farther. Then we passed through another square and arrived at the court where the Great Cham maintained his residence. On each side of the quadrangle stood soldiers wearing long red robes of figured silk. In the front row on the left side consisted 112 men each of whom held a special banner. Beside the throne stood 22 men holding precious parasols on which were ten round circles, like suns followed by six moons. [...] The Deputy-*toutangh* [an official in the Qing Dynasty] moved to the left, and made signs to the ambassadors that they should wait at the tenth-grade stone, which was to be their station. Being thus placed, the herald

²⁹² The ritual which emissaries had to knock their foreheads on the ground is to show their respect for and submission to the Emperor. See the interpretation by Michael Harbsmeier, "The Dream of Traveling to China," in *Treasures from Imperial China: The Forbidden City and the Royal Danish Court* (Copenhagen: Den Kongelige Solvkaammer, 2006), 354–61.

called to them loudly, saying, go stand before the throne [...] bow your heads three times to the ground, and we went back to our first place. (Den 1^e October kregen Haar E.^s orde om ‘s andren daags voor de keyzer te verschijnen, waarop Pinksintou met twe Kantonsche mandorijns en zommige hovelingen heel vroegh in de logie quamen om Haar E.^s te geleiden. [...] Wij wierden op de tweede plaats van ‘t hoof na de slinke zij gesteld, alwaar Haar E.^s nederzaaten om den dat te verbeyden. [...] Vooruit, aan weersijden van een hooge poort, stonden drie zware olifanten, die zeer kurieus waren uitgeputs en geladen met vergulde torens, daar zoo veell menschen achter zwermden, datt er geen doorzien was. Daarna passierden wij noch een plaats en quamen endlik aan ‘t binnenhoff, alwaar de Grote Cham zijn residentie houdt. Het gansche vierkant was an weersijden bezet met krijgsvolk, die altegaar gekleedt waren met lange rocken van roode gefigurierde zijde stiften. Het voorste gelit aan d’ene zij bestondt in 112 koppen, die ijder een bijzonder veldteken voerden. Naast an den troon stonden 22 mannen met kostelijke zonnescharmten, daarop volgden tien ronde cirkels, als sonnen, toen zes maanen. Hiernevens zach men 16 stangen mett groote zijde quasten van allerley verwe. Bij deze stonden zesendertig standarden. [...] Aan d’andre zijde zach men even ‘tzelfde nevens een ontelbar tall van hovelingen. [...] D’onder-taitong ging an de slinke zij en weez Haar E.^s dat zij an den tienden graadtsteen mosten stillestaan. Toen riep de heerhold als voors., waarop wij altezamen nederknielden en bogen ‘t hooft driemaal

an de eerde, traden toen gezwind terzijden aff en gingen weder op onze eerste plaats.)²⁹³

Many details described in the text have been visualized in the drawing, for instance, the grand building complex, the soldiers standing on either side of the square, and the Kowtow ritual taking place in the center. All this gives the impression that this drawing was made on the basis of direct observation. The contemporary reader must have been amazed by the grand Chinese architecture. So, it is not at all surprising that many copies of this design were made in various media.²⁹⁴



Figure 5.21. Drawing folio 185 in the Paris manuscript.

With our present knowledge of the Forbidden City, we can examine the accuracy of the representation in this drawing at least from the background

²⁹³ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhoofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 53.

²⁹⁴ About the designs based on Nieuhof's picture of the *Taihe Dian*, see Dematte and Reed, *China on Paper*, 14.

building complex. According to Nieuhof's description, the Dutch envoy arrived before daylight and waited in the second square of the Forbidden City. Then, along with the ambassadors of other countries, they went to the court through another square, on either side of which stood soldiers. And it is here that the formal meeting with the Chinese emperor and the ritual of the Kowtow took place. This means the buildings should be located at the second square of the Forbidden City. According to Michael Harbsmeier's interpretation, the building complex should be the earliest European depiction of the Hall of Supreme Harmony (*Taihe Dian*, 太和殿), an audience hall beautifully and lavishly elevated on a three tiered marble terrace.²⁹⁵ On the map of the Forbidden City, the building complex in the second square is the *Taihe Dian* (fig. 5.22).

²⁹⁵ Harbsmeier, "The Dream of Traveling to China," 355.

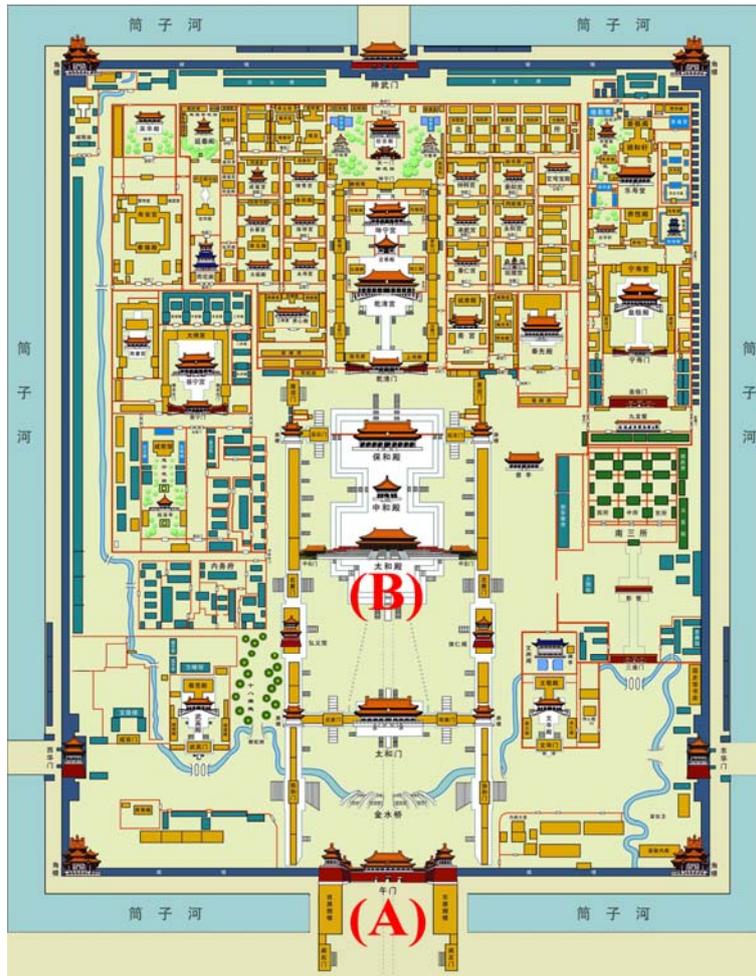


Figure 5.22. A map of the Forbidden City. *A* shows the location of the Wu Men (the southern gate), and *B* shows the Taihe Dian (the Hall of Supreme Harmony).

This was the usual place for Chinese emperors to receive tribute from foreign embassies in the Qing Dynasty,²⁹⁶ and court artists depicted similar occasions as well, as in the painting “Ten Thousand Envoys Come to Pay Tribute” (fig. 5.23). In this painting, some foreign envoys are gathering in

²⁹⁶ For the rules governing where Chinese emperors in the Qing Dynasty met foreign embassies in the Forbidden City, see Changjian Guo, Linyu Feng, and Wuyuan Guo, *World Heritage Sites in China* (中国的世界遗产) (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2003), 19.

the courtyard between the Wu Men (午门, see *A* in figure 5.22) and the Taihe Dian and some envoys are presenting gifts to the Chinese emperor during the New Year celebrations held at the Taihe Dian, in front of which eunuchs and officials are waiting.²⁹⁷ Comparing Nieuhof's drawing and the Chinese painting we find that the structure and appearance of the building complex are not the same.



Figure 5.23. Anonymous court artists, “Ten Thousand Envoys Come to Pay Tribute,” 1761. Hanging scroll, colour on silk, 322 x 216 cm, the Palace Museum, Beijing.

To figure out which one of them is more accurate, a comparison with the actual scene (see figure 5.24) is necessary. One may find that quite a few

²⁹⁷ Most of the palace is veiled in mist but, in the space to the right of the *Taihe Dian* a group of eunuchs is preparing sets of return gifts for the envoys.

key features of this magnificent architecture are absent from Nieuhof's drawing.²⁹⁸ The main palace is raised on a three-tiered terrace and has a roof with double eaves decorated with carved dragons and phoenixes, most of them are gilded. However, the shape of the main building in the drawing certainly does not reflect the essential characteristics of the double-roof structure nor the steps which lead to the great audience hall and the great number of columns under the roof. Moreover, in reality the buildings on each side are not as magnificent in their size or as tight in their composition as the buildings shown in the drawing.

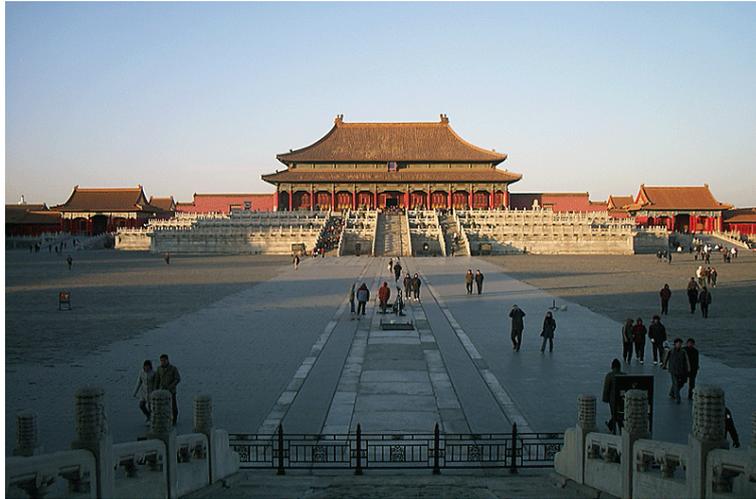


Figure 5.24. Photograph of the Taihe Dian, the Palace Museum, Beijing.

However, when looking at the actual situation of the buildings in Forbidden City we find that the main structure in the drawing greatly

²⁹⁸ The main hall of the Forbidden City is twenty-seven meters high, sixty-four meters wide and thirty-seven meters deep. It has a roof with double eaves and is decorated with carved dragons and phoenixes, most of them gilded. The building is raised on a three-tiered terrace, eight meters high, enclosed by marble balustrades, while those around the same courtyard were kept lower so as to set off the magnificence of the hall. More information on the Taihe Dian, see Zhuoyun Yu and Graham Hutt, *Palaces of the Forbidden City* (London: Allen Lane, 1984), and Guo, Feng, and Guo, *World Heritage Sites in China*, 19.

resembles the Wu Men (午门, figure 5.25), the gate in front of the Taihe Men (太和门, the gate between points *A* and *B* in figure 5.22). As the main entrance of the Forbidden City, it is composed of a series of buildings: the central one is the palace which is nine bays wide, with double roofs; on each side, a thirteen-bay-wide building with a single roof connects the two pavilions at the top.²⁹⁹ The battered red base wall is a three-sided rectangular inverted U on the plan. However, in the manuscript drawing, the connected buildings with single roofs standing on either side are replaced by rows of three separate buildings. Nieuhof must have seen this Wu Men gate, for it is the gate through which the ambassadors had to pass before entering into the Taihe Dian to meet Chinese emperor. This was the same entry for the third Dutch embassy to enter into Peking, as shown in the drawing by Van Doornik (fig. 5.26). Although some details in his drawing of the Wu Men are slightly exaggerated (such as the curved double-roof and relatively high finial), the fundamental complex structure is fairly accurate. So it is possible that Nieuhof was also deeply impressed by the splendid Wu Men and confused it with the Taihe Dian when he made sketches of the imperial palace.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 32.



Figure 5.25. Photograph of the Wu Men, the Forbidden City, Beijing.



Figure 5.26. Pieter van Doornik, “Het Keijzers Hof in Peckin,” 1666–68, *Atlas van Stolk*, Rotterdam.

To a large extent, Nieuhof’s drawing provides western readers with a magnificent impression of what the highly mysterious Forbidden City

looked like and how the Dutch ambassadors met the Emperor. But the background setting—the magnificent buildings in this drawing—appears to be a mingling of the structure of Wu Men and the typical Chinese architecture of Taihe Dian. While it re-creates the awe-filled atmosphere surrounding such an occasion, it is not a precise delineation.

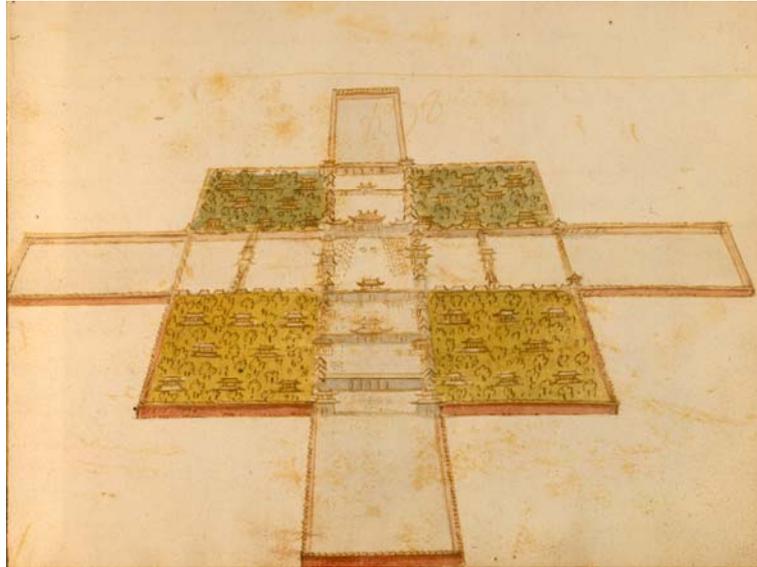


Figure 5.27. Drawing folio 189 in the Paris manuscript.

Similarly, Nieuhof seemingly did not have much time or opportunity to observe the structure of the Forbidden City. To do so, he would have needed to go through the Forbidden City and climb up the *Jing Shan* (景山) hill for a panoramic view of its layout. But he still managed to draw an outline of the Forbidden City, as shown in figure 5.27. In reality, the structure of the Forbidden City is a long rectangle, with a strong north-south axis leading to and through the imperial palace at the centre (see figure 5.22). The map in the manuscript correctly emphasizes the powerful symmetry of layout, but incorrectly inserts additional elements on either side of the rectangular.

What is more, the rough depiction of the buildings and gardens inside of the Forbidden City does not at all reflect the proper location of these buildings. The buildings behind the Taihe Dian in the Forbidden City were the exclusive precinct of the imperial family and therefore would definitely not have been accessible to a foreign envoy.



Figure 5.28. Drawing folio 101 in the Paris manuscript.

One more drawing I would like to discuss shows how Nieuhof combined different scenes into one thematic presentation and made it look natural. In one such overview he shows the various ways in which Chinese beggars wheedled people out of money (fig. 5.28). At the time of the Dutch envoys' visit, China was experiencing a turbulent change of dynasty. Nieuhof records how prosperous cities and towns had been destroyed reducing magnificent buildings into rubble. Ordinary people naturally suffered from the disruption caused by this war and many had been made

homeless. This may have been the reason why Nieuhof encountered so many beggars. He wrote about them as follows:

When we had moored at the afore-said the town (Nanking), various beggars came aboard and indulged in some strange antics. Two of them butted each other's heads to such an extraordinary degree that those who saw them were shocked. They did not stop until we gave them money; [if we had not done so] they would have battered each other to death, which had happened on various occasions. There was another one who was on his knees and seemed to be talking to himself and then he struck his forehead on a heavy rock. He knocked so hard that the earth trembled. Some of them had dry kindling on their heads which they set fire to and they let it burn down completely and it stank. They made so much noise with their shrieking and moaning that it was impossible not to give them something. Those who were blind went in groups. They hit so mercilessly to the rhythm some words on their bare chest and backs that blood spurted forth. Some of these beggars had been misshapen since childhood; their appearance was so ghastly they looked like devils. Later, when we were on the banks of the Yellow River, a man who predicted the weather came aboard; he wanted to look dangerous and impressive so he had stuck an iron bodkin through his cheek and he carried two sharp cutting knives and threatened to harm himself if we did not give him silver. He was clad only trousers and trembled like a man possessed by the devil. All the Tartars were so scared they gave him presents to

solicit a good weather. We laughed about that and we let him go without silver saying we fear God but not the devil.³⁰⁰

Most of the beggars mentioned above can be seen in this drawing. According to the sequence mentioned above, the groups of beggars are depicted in the following arrangement: the two beggars knocking their heads together with great force are in the middle background; the one striking his bare forehead against a round stone is in the left foreground; the one who set fire to combustible material on his head is in the middle distance; the two who beat their breasts with stones are in the left middle ground; the one who carried two sharp knives in his hands and had an iron bodkin through his face is shown on a small boat in the left foreground. The accompanying text in the manuscript states that the last beggar was encountered by the embassy on the banks of the Yellow River (Huang He, 黄河), while the others were encountered in the city of Nanking; therefore, Nieuhof has artificially grouped them together with other groups of beggars.

The other figure in the boat next to this beggar is not mentioned in the manuscript text, but the text in the printed book has some information about

³⁰⁰ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 44. The Dutch text is, “toen wij hier bij deze voorseide stad lagen, quamen onz verscheide bedelaars aan boord, die vreemde kuuren bedreven. Daar was er onder ander twee die zoo geweldig mette koppen tegen malkander stieten, datt het all d’aanschouwers verschrikte. Dit houden zij gaande, tottdat men haar een almoes geeft, off d’een off d’ander moet daar dood blijven leggen, gelijk het menigmaal gebuirdt. Een ander lagh op zijn knijen en murmureerde (zoo ’t scheen) tegen zichzelf, sloeg daarna met het voorhoofd op een zware steen, datt er’t hoofd die zij aansteken en latend tot op de zwaarde afbranden, dattet stinkt, maken dan zoo lange rumoer met krijten en kermen, dat men haar wat geven moet. De blinden gaan met troupen bij malkander, slaan haar op de maat van zommige woorden zoo ongenadig met stenen op de bloote borst en rugge, datter ’t bloed uitspruit. Zommige van deze truggelaars zijn van jonkheid an heel wanstaltich voortgebracht en zoo ijslik van opzicht als de nicker zelfff. In de Gele Rivier quam onz naderhand een weermaker aan boord, die om vervaarlik te schijnene een ijzre priem door de wang stack en droegh twe scharpe hakmessen, daar hij zichzelf me dreigde te quetsen, zoo men hem geen zilver gaff. Hij zat moedernaakt met een broek om’t lijff en beefed al seen mensch die van den duivel bezeten is. De Tartars waren altegaar zeer verveerd, gaven hem veell schenkadien om goet wee rte hebben.”

him: “Next to him³⁰¹ sat one of the local priests, who had a book in his hand, wherein he said every person who gave him something was to write his name; but the ambassadors refused to do so.”³⁰² On the basis of this text, this figure can be identified as a “priest” or in the Chinese religious context. It was common for monks to raise donations but it is still strange that he appears with the beggar on the boat. In addition to all these beggars, there is a figure rolling over the ground in the left background, but he is neither mentioned in the manuscript text nor in the printed book. Therefore, as said above, this drawing is an artificial combination of at least five scenes based on scattered sketches.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, Nieuhof’s effort to render a sense of naturalness to cityscapes is mainly reflected in composing the scenes in ways commonly found in Dutch landscape paintings, prints, and drawings of the seventeenth century. For a plausible effect, many typical Chinese buildings that do reflect characteristics of Chinese architecture have been inserted into these compositional patterns. In other words, many of Nieuhof’s cityscapes are artificially composed. The procedure may be like this: to produce a “lifelike” drawing, he first arranges the composition according to Dutch convention and then selects elements of typical Chinese architecture such as a pagoda or watchtower. To create an air of even greater familiarity, he occasionally places Chinese statues in Dutch interiors. One consequence of this is that these drawings are made up of such disparate elements that they

³⁰¹ In the text of the printed book, “him” is the beggar who has two bodkins through his hands and in his mouth. But they are not mentioned at the same place in the manuscript text and as this part of the text in the printed book is not a travel account but a general introduction to Chinese costume and custom, it is very possible that the text is based on this drawing.

³⁰² Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 162.

cannot possibly represent a specific location, and some buildings that are supposed to be landmarks can hardly be recognized as such. Therefore, Nieuhof's intention is not so much to produce topographically accurate drawings of Chinese cities, but to make plausible, harmonious scenes of China that appeal to and please Western readers. This approach is particularly understandable when we consider that Nieuhof's artistic sensibilities are rooted in and affected by conventional Dutch notions of pictorial tradition. The sense of familiarity and naturalness obtained through this approach will have satisfied European spectators in their thirst for fantasies about a distant and exotic empire and will have given them the impression that these drawings were made "na het leven."

Chapter 6 The Illustrations in the Printed Book

6.1 The publishers' strategy on the illustrations

Instead of being on display to the public, Nieuhof's charming present to the Gentlemen Seventeen and his portfolio of original sketches were on view to only a very small, select group of people. Not until the first Dutch edition had been published seven years after his return from China could Western readers have access to Nieuhof's account and images of China. In fact, the profound impact on European sensibilities made by Nieuhof's images of China is attributable to the book edition and the widely disseminated translations based on the original Dutch publication. Through these works, Western readers were able to obtain a vivid visual impression of China, while European artists also drew a wealth of inspiration from them, especially those who made chinoiserie. In a time at which any pictures of this mysterious empire were extremely rare, the illustrations in the printed book played a fundamental role in presenting China to Western readers.

Normally, the illustrations in seventeenth-century travelogues were made from copper engravings. The original drawing was first cut into the copperplate surface by the engraver with a steel tool called a burin. The design was usually a copy of an artist's original drawing or sketch. After that, the engraved copper plate was inked to leave ink in the engraved lines. When the plate was put through a high-pressure printing press, the sheet of paper under the plate picked up the ink from the engraved lines and the print was finished. If the engraver did not etch a mirror image of the sketch or drawing to make the design in the copper plate, the printed image was the reverse of the original. The engravings in *Het Gezantschap* of course had to

follow their source, namely, the sketches Nieuhof produced on site or the drawings in the Paris manuscript, or both. But here, it is noteworthy that the illustrations in the printed book are not the reverse of the drawings in the Paris manuscript. Normally, the engraver first copied the design on transparent paper and applied the back side of the paper to the plate so as to get the same image as the source.

This provides a clue about the production of the illustrations in the printed books, including Thévenot's edition. As discussed in the Introduction, Thévenot had obtained two copies of Nieuhof's manuscript and had been shown Nieuhof's original drawings. His edition has been acknowledged to be the one closest to Nieuhof's original manuscript. While the text is a faithful rendition, however, Thévenot did not absolutely stick to Nieuhof's images of China when he selected illustrations for his source publication. In his opinion, Nieuhof's drawings of Chinese cityscapes did not tally with the accompanying descriptions and might just as well have been the fruit of his pleasure and invention.³⁰³ And in his eyes, "all the towns of China are so alike, when one has seen one, one has seen them all."³⁰⁴ Therefore, his collection only contains twelve illustrations, most of which are individual representations of Chinese people, animals, and buildings, but ignoring the landscapes. In fact, not only did he omit most of the cityscapes, he also combined different subjects into one engraving. For instance, figure 6.1 shows a man wearing the costume of an official and holding a knife at his waist in the centre of the picture. To the viewer's right stands a Chinese woman in profile with her right side towards the viewer, which brings a better angle for showing the woman's hairstyle, garment, and

³⁰³ See Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux*, Introduction.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, introduction.

ornaments. This woman is represented as much smaller than the man in an artificial composition that also includes a meadow in the foreground and the plan of the Forbidden City in the background. Apparently, here, Thévenot preferred to compose a picture with different subjects regardless of their connection—or lack of one—to each other. This engraving also demonstrates two points about the nature of Nieuhof's original sketches and the relationship between Thévenot's version and Van Meurs's edition. First of all, as figure 6.2 shows, the Chinese official and the plan of the Forbidden City also appear in Van Meurs's edition, but only the latter's prototype can be found in the Paris manuscript: the drawing of the Chinese official does not appear in the Paris manuscript. This means that in addition to the drawings in the Paris manuscript, there must have been other sketches made by Nieuhof on site available for the engravers to make the engravings in Thévenot's version and Van Meurs's edition. Second, it is noteworthy that although the Chinese official and the plan of the Forbidden City in these two engravings look alike, on closer inspection one can find subtle differences such as the official's facial expression, the shape of his *piling*, the necklace, the type of knife, and so forth. The resemblances suggest that they originate from the same source, that is, the original sketches, while the differences indicate that the engravers chose different criteria in dealing with the sketches. That is to say, the illustrations in Thévenot's version are not based on those in Van Meurs's edition. This is actually much more apparent when we compare the other illustrations that share the same subjects. These two points suggest that Guido van Meersbergen's opinion that Thévenot's version was merely a highly abbreviated version of Nieuhof's book is inaccurate.



Figure 6.1. Copper engraving from Thévenot, *Relations de Divers Voyages Curieux, Qui N'ont Point Esté Publiées ou Qui Ont Esté Traduites d'Hachuyt, de Purchas, et d'autres Voyageurs Anglois, Hollandais, Portugais, Allemands, Espagnols, et quelques Persans, Arabes et autres orientaux* (Paris, 1666).



Figure 6.2. Copper engravings from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

This example shows that when Thévenot dealt with Nieuhof's images of China, he chose to concentrate on themes that he valued and combined them into one image regardless of whether they had anything to do with

each other.³⁰⁵ This is actually a very common approach adopted by contemporary editors and publishers. Blussé has pointed out that in *Gedenkwaerdig Bedryf*, Olfer Dapper adopted Van Doornik's designs for the illustrations in his book. When comparing Van Doornik's original drawing (fig. 6.3) and the illustration (fig. 6.4) of the famous bridge of Fuzhou, he demonstrated that the illustration in Dapper's edition followed Van Doornik's drawing, but that the engraver added many embellishments, such as in the addition of a foreground, many boats on the water, and a great number of people on the riverbank.



Figure 6.3. Pieter van Doornik, “Tafscheijt van D’ambassadeurs na Peekin aan De Brugh Hongsankio gelegen mijlen buiten Hocsiew,” 1666–68, Atlas van Stolk, Rotterdam.

³⁰⁵ According to Blussé, Thévenot probably lacked sufficient funding to reproduce as many engravings as in the first Dutch edition. See Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuwofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 17.



Figure 6.4. Copper engraving from O. Dapper, *Gedenkwaardig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye, op de kuste en in het keizerrijk van Taising of Sina* (Amsterdam, 1667).

Back to the illustrations in Nieuhof’s book of China, one of the principal characteristics of the engravings claimed by the publishers, as mentioned in the Introduction, is that they are made “na het leven”. Nevertheless, given the fact that the printed book was published seven years after the submission of the manuscript and that the engravings are much more elaborated than the drawings, people may wonder to what extent these “improvements” made them more reliable and specific.

The following part is dedicated to an investigation of the similarities and differences between the drawings and engravings, especially regarding the kinds of changes that were made in the engravings, how the engravers tried to improve the “na het leven” representation, and to what extent these changes have further articulated the meanings of these drawings.

6.2 Engravings which share similar design as the drawings

In addition to the frontispiece, the rest of the illustrations include one full-page engraved portrait of Nieuhof with a poem by Jan Vos beneath (as shown in figure 1), a large folding map of China, which traces the envoys' route, thirty-four double-page engraved plates and views of Batavia, Canton, Macao, Nankan, Nankin, Peking, and other places, and 110 half-page engraved views and plates of religious and public ceremonies, costumes, animals, fish, and plants mentioned in the text with captions in Dutch.

The first thing to note in terms of the difference between the drawings in the Paris manuscript and the engravings in the book is their quantity. In contrast to the 81 drawings in the manuscript, there are around 150 engravings in the first Dutch edition. Classified according to theme, four categories make up the majority of the engravings: landscapes, cityscapes, and architecture (around ninety-five engravings); historical events (five engravings); plants (fourteen) and animals (seven); and Chinese figures (twenty). Of these 150 engravings, approximately 70 bear a likeness to the drawings in the manuscript, whether it is a corresponding situation or merely contains certain elements of a specific drawing.

Seventy engravings are very closely related to the drawings in the Paris manuscript. Either the drawings in the manuscript provided the principal source for the reproduction of the engravings in the first Dutch edition; or the drawings and engravings shared the same source, namely, Nieuhof's original sketches produced during his travels in China and the Chinese pictorial material he brought back to Holland. Regardless of the source, the engravers had to deal with the rough representations and confusing details in Nieuhof's sketches or drawings. How could engravers who had never beheld China with their own eyes fashion "na het leven" engravings? What

kind of “improvements” were made in the engravings? An interesting example that may shed some light on these issues is the drawing folio 128 (fig. 6.5) representing a Chinese temple. The accompanying text in the manuscript provides no information other than that it is “very beautiful and superlative.”³⁰⁶ However, more specific information can be gleaned from the accompanying text in the printed book, which is set out as the following:

Not far from Xantsui stands a famous idol-temple, called Teywanmiao, which is held in such great esteem amongst them, that they reckon it for one of the chiefest in all China. It is built very high, with strong walls of grey stone, and gallantly adorned after the Chinese fashion. The top of this temple is covered with yellow glazed tiles, and the walls are also colored after the same manner; so that when the sun shines, it glisters like gold all over.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 46. The Dutch text is, “In ’t midden der stad op de kant van ’t water staat de pagoda van Teywan Miao, die zeer schoon en uitmuntende is.”

³⁰⁷ Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 94.



Figure 6.5. Drawing folio 128 in the Paris manuscript.

According to this description, this temple was located in the town of Zhangqiu (张秋镇) and it was built on a magnificent scale and well decorated. The name of the temple, Teywanmiao, appears to be a rendering of its Chinese name Dawangmiao (大王庙, a temple for a king). The gazetteer of the county Yanggu (阳谷县), where Zhangqiu was located in, indicates that there were several religious buildings on the riverbank, including the Chenghuangmiao (城隍庙, Temple of the City God) and the Guandimiao (关帝庙, Temple of Guanyu), but none of them was called Dawangmiao.³⁰⁸ Nevertheless, records of this temple can be found in the

³⁰⁸ About the record of such religious architectures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see *The Gazetteer of Yanggu Prefecture (阳谷县志)*, (Taipei: Chengwen Publishing House 成文出版社, 1942), 170–71. However, temples to Guan Yu, who was associated with war and loyalty, were found in most major cities. See Jessica Rawson, *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 164.

gazetteer of Dongchang (东昌), a town near Zhangqiu.³⁰⁹ It is possible that either Nieuhof mistook the Dawangmiao temple in the town of Dongchang for another temple in Zhangqiu or he could not remember the name of the temple in Zhangqiu.³¹⁰ Regrettably, the Dawangmiao temple in the town of Dongchang no longer exists and there is no way to compare it with the drawing.

The drawing itself may well give some information about the nature of this temple and tell us why Nieuhof depicted it as he did. Nieuhof focuses on the temple's façade, which consists of a splendid roof and strong framing walls. They have been presented in an elaborate manner so that the viewer can appreciate how they are constructed in typical Chinese fashion and decorated with Chinese patterns. The decoration of the roof shows the classic features of traditional Chinese architecture, including tiles, heavy overhangs, and animal ornaments on the roof ridge. There are also some confusing depictions such as the structure of the façade, particularly the roof and the framing wall.

The most attractive part of the façade of the temple is its roof, which is constructed in a form resembling a Chinese arch. Moreover, in contrast to the principle of symmetry so characteristic of Chinese architecture, two eaves appear on the right side and their size is much smaller than the eave on the left. Perhaps to balance the additional eave on the right, an extra wall

³⁰⁹ According to the records, Dawangmiao was located on the river bank to worship the Dragon King, see *The Gazetteer of Dongchang Prefecture* (嘉庆东昌府志) (Phoenix Publishing House 凤凰出版社, 2004), 188.

³¹⁰ If Nieuhof's memory of the name of the temple is accurate but its location is wrong, this temple might have been the Dawangmiao in Dongchang, because in the gazetteers, the Dawangmiao Temple was located in this place. The problem is that this hypothesis contradicts the sequence of the cities through which the Dutch passed: the drawing of Dongchang appears after the drawing of Zhangqiu, but the drawing of Zhangqiu comes after the drawing of the temple. That is to say, if the sequence of the towns and cities is based on the series set out in their itinerary, this temple should be in Zhangqiu rather than in Dongchang.

is depicted on the right just under the roof, which gives an impression that the façade has an extra section on its right side.

Apparently, this arrangement was not so convincing to the engraver working with this image for the printed book in 1665. In the engraving (fig. 6.6), the “extra” part of the façade was moved to the side of the building, which helped to correct the distorted perspective. In addition, it offered a three-dimensional effect and left a reasonable space for the roof and wall of the side part of the building. Despite these efforts to improve the three-dimensional effect of the stairway and the entrance of the temple, the lack of knowledge of Chinese temples means that the representation of the layout of the temple complex remains confusing.

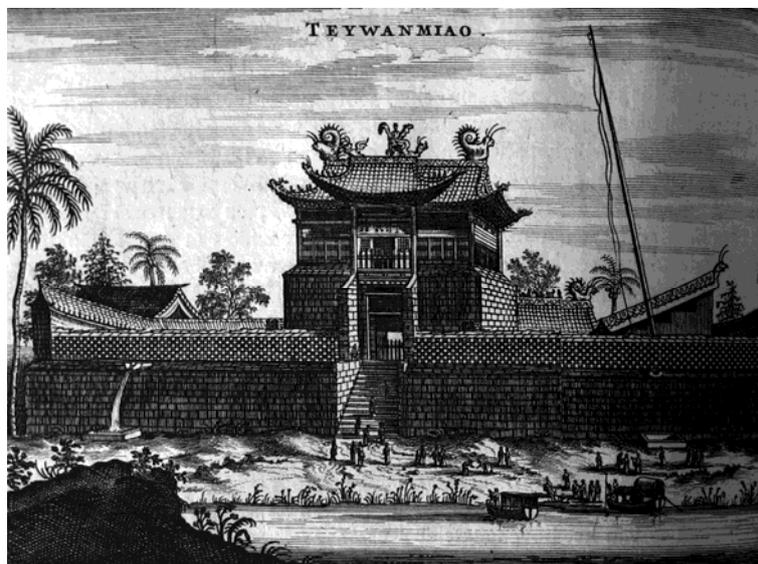


Figure 6.6. Engraving of Teywanmiao from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

As a matter of fact, in many cases, the confusing representations in the drawings carry over to the engravings. For instance, compared with the

drawing (fig. 5.19), the engraving of the cityscape of the town of Taihe (fig. 6.7) is much clearer and more vivid, enlivened with trees, boats, and figures in the foreground, but the two buildings on the left of the city gate and tower are still located on top of the city wall and resemble, against all odds, the city gates and tower. The engravers were in no position to make any more corrections of the inaccurate depictions; all they could do was to refine the rough depictions in the drawings on the basis of their own imagination.



Figure 6.7. Copper engraving from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

The engraving of the Chinese temple also reflects another important approach used by the engravers to improve the representations in the drawings, namely, to add various embellishments and exaggerations. In contrast to the plain representation of the temple in the drawing folio 128, this engraving is filled in with clouds in the sky, various boats lying on the shore, tiny human figures walking towards the temple, and extremely tall palm trees appearing here and there. The boats and figures appear so

frequently and in such a specific pattern in many engravings that they can hardly be regarded as specific, needless to say that their small size is apparently exaggerated to set off the gigantic temple. Most of these subjects serve as kind of decoration for the cityscapes. For instance, the palm tree should not appear in the Zhangqiu, a small town in northern China; but as one of the engravers' favourite subject, palm trees appear in many places regardless of whether they grow in the place shown. Therefore, their presence actually has more to do with decorating of the cityscapes than with providing specific information about a real scene.

In addition, regarding the trees, two points need to be made. First, they set a frame for the whole picture. In this engraving, the tall palm tree on the left side helps frame the picture. This approach is reminiscent of some sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painting. In one of Van de Velde's series of the seasons (fig. 6.8), the tree retains a dominant position on the right side, and its upper branches curve to the left to follow the edge of the frame.³¹¹ Apparently here the tree not only plays a role in intimating the season or decoration, but also works as a stage flat to frame the image at the sides. The placement of the tree at the side of the engraving is an artistic device intended to increase the harmonious effect of the whole image.

³¹¹ On Van de Velde's employment of trees to frame pictures, see Roy Bolton, *Old Master Paintings and Drawings* (London: Sphinx Books, 2009), 364.



Figure 6.8. Van de Velde, “Autumn,” from the series of “The Seasons,” 1617.

Second, it balances the composition of the townscape, as discussed in the example of the drawing folio 49 (see fig. 5.12). In this cityscape, a fanciful, giant tree rises from the ground and stretches beyond the picture plane at the right and top, lending weight to the overall composition. It also reinforces the sense of depth, as do the more deeply etched areas in the foreground.

For most Chinese cityscapes, the engravers adopted a much simpler approach. In the manuscript drawings, most cityscapes and townscapes are observed from a distance, usually from the water. Consequently, the whole fore- and middle grounds are often dominated by a vast stretch of water and the city appears unobtrusively in the background, with or without a number of huge, grotesque mountains towering behind it. The city, which is represented by a wall, a gate, and gate towers, is very blurred, so the viewer obtains no more than a rough impression without elaborated details. In

contrast to the vague representation in the drawings, the engravers tried to present the reader with clearly articulated cityscapes.

The most common approach to this is to pull the city and town in the background closer, just as a camera lens zooms in on a distant subject. When comparing the cityscapes in the drawings and those in the engravings, one finds that either the vast stretch of water in the foreground is foreshortened or the land in the middle ground is cut off; either way, the city in the background is given a better position. For instance, in the drawing folio 81 (fig. 6.9), the town of An'qing (安庆) is observed at a distance, from the water, at a low angle. An ordinary stretch of water occupies the whole foreground, while the town takes up only a narrow sliver in the background. However, the corresponding townscape in the engraving (fig. 6.10) seems to have been observed from a closer, more elevated point, so the town appears much closer and the foreground is no longer a broad expanse of water but is filled with the riverbank and suburb. Moreover, compared with the drawing, the townscape in the engraving is enriched with various elements such as boats on the river, figures dotted around here and there, and trees growing up among the buildings in the background. To a certain extent, this approach compensates for the obscure depiction in the drawing. So the cityscapes in the engravings are clearer, more vivid and seem more natural. Achieving this sharpness required the engravers to clarify and modify the rough, unclear details in the drawings. But these modifications hardly constitute fundamental improvements in the accuracy of the drawings.



Figure 6.9. Drawing folio 81 in the Paris manuscript.

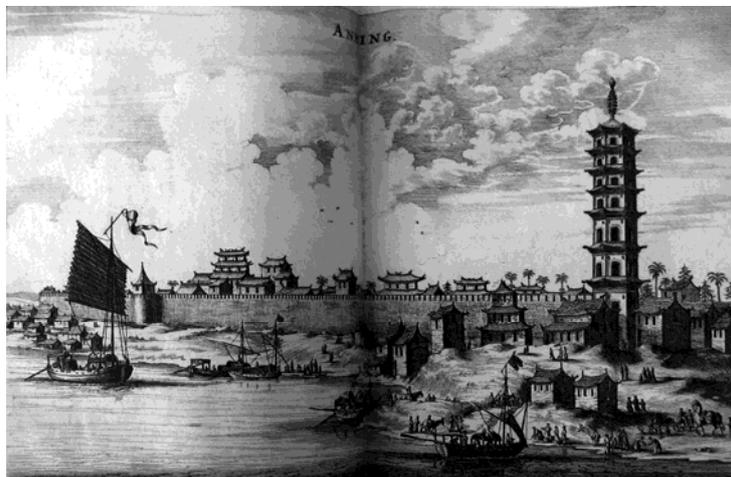


Figure 6.10. Copper engraving from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

6.3 Extra engravings

In addition to the seventy engravings that can be identified with drawings in the Paris manuscript, there are around eighty engravings based on material that does not correspond directly with material found in the

Paris manuscript. Many of these eighty engravings deal with exotic plants, animals, and people.³¹² As has been discussed previously, the sources for these engravings are very likely other sketches that Nieuhof made on site. This possibility has been discussed previously. Regarding the other sources, it is noteworthy that the majority of these engravings appear in the last part of the book, specifically in the section devoted to the introduction of the local costumes, fauna, and flora. Such an arrangement was actually quite common in seventeenth-century travel accounts in which the introduction to exotic plants and animals was reserved for the end of the book.³¹³

What exactly the sources might be is unclear, but some of the engravings do offer clues. For instance, the palm tree in the engraving shown in figure 6.11 strongly resembles the palm tree in Frans Post's painting (fig. 6.12). Likewise, the scene of the stranded whale in the engraving (fig. 6.13) also appears in the late-sixteenth-century Dutch prints, as can be seen in figure 6.14, which shows a beached whale at Katwijk in 1598. Given these similarities, it is highly possible that the representation of plants and animals that do not appear in the drawings in the Paris manuscript might have been taken from various travel accounts and Dutch pictorial sources to which the engravers would have had access. According to Ulrichs, the engravings in *Het Gezantschap* were made by the publisher Jacob van Meurs himself and four other members of his workshop.³¹⁴ Their familiarity with contemporary works would likely have influenced their

³¹² Considering the total number of engravings of plants (fourteen), animals (four) and Chinese figures (twenty), it is worth noting that only one picture of a plant (the kapok tree) and a bird (the cormorant) and five pictures of Chinese figures appear in the drawings of the Paris manuscript; the majority of these engravings bear little relationship to the manuscript.

³¹³ For instance, in many travelogues of Brazil in the seventeenth century, animals, plants, and local people are represented in a style quite similar to that found in the engravings in Nieuhof's book. These pictures can be seen in Peter Whitehead, *A Portrait of Dutch 17th Century Brazil* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1989).

³¹⁴ Ulrichs, *Johan Nieuhofs Blick Auf China (1655–1657)*, 153.

handling of the pictorial material made by Nieuhof, so it would be no wonder to see the exotic motifs familiar to the contemporary reader also appear in Nieuhof's books about China.



Figure 6.11. Copper engraving from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).



Figure 6.12. Frans Post, "A Brazilian Landscape," 1670–75. Oil on oak panel, 22 x 27 cm. Private collection.

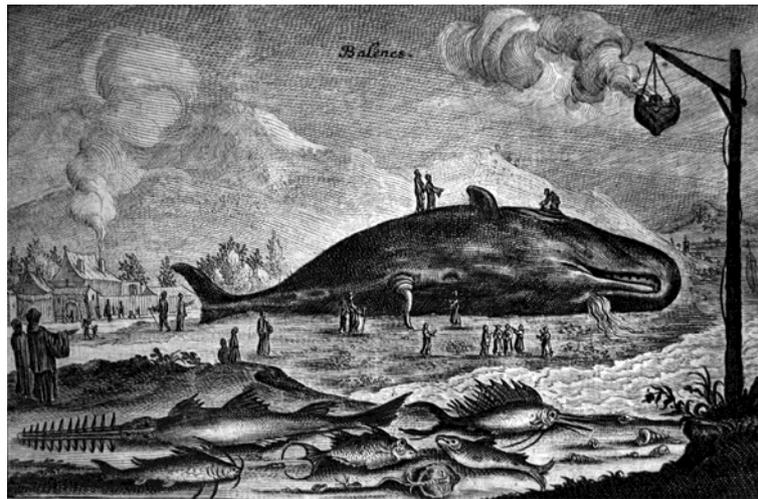


Figure 6.13. Copper engraving from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).



Figure 6.14. Jacob Matham, “Beached Whale at Katwijk, 3 February 1598.”

Unquestionably, such general scenes were fairly accessible to the engravers.³¹⁵ As a matter of fact, not only were some of the engravings of China in the printed book derived from illustrations in other travel journals, but Nieuhof's pictures of China were also borrowed for other travel journals. In addition from the reproductions of Nieuhof's pictures of China presented in the later publications about China by Dapper and Kircher, these pictures were appropriated for travel journals about other countries.³¹⁶ One of the engravings (fig. 6.15) in Phillipus Baldaeus's book titled *A true and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon* published in Amsterdam in 1672 is a good example.³¹⁷ The engraving shows the tyrant Rajasingha's execution of Virasundara, a scion of the Peradernya (Peradenya) branch of the royal house. Both the wall cloth and the tyrant sitting on the platform in the centre remind us of Nieuhof's image of Shang Kexi, the governor of Canton (see fig. 4.1). The background setting, and the decoration and style of the architecture resemble the depiction of Chinese architecture in Nieuhof's book. Apparently, when the engraver or editor sought to represent the tyrant to his reader, he looked for sources and found Nieuhof's representation of the Chinese official fit his image of what the tyrant in Ceylon should look like. It was a common practice for seventeenth-century Dutch engravers to borrow liberally from other travel journals in the process of producing illustrations for their own.

³¹⁵ On how European engravers copied from each other's illustrated travelogues, see Ying Sun, *Wandlungen des Europäischen Chinabildes in Illustrierten Reiseberichten des 17. Und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996).

³¹⁶ See Dapper, *Gedenkwaardig Bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye op de Kuste en in het Keizerrijk van Taising of Sina*; Athanasius Kircher, *Athanasii Kircheri E Soc. Jesu China Monumentis Qua Sacris Quà Profanis, Nec Non Variis Naturæ & Artis Spectaculis, Aliarumque Rerum Memorabilium Argumentis Illustrata, Auspiciis Leopoldi Primi Rom* (Amsterdam: Jacob van Meurs, 1667).

³¹⁷ Phillipus Baldaeus, *A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon*, trans. Pieter Brohier (Ceylon Historical Journal, 1960), 8–9.

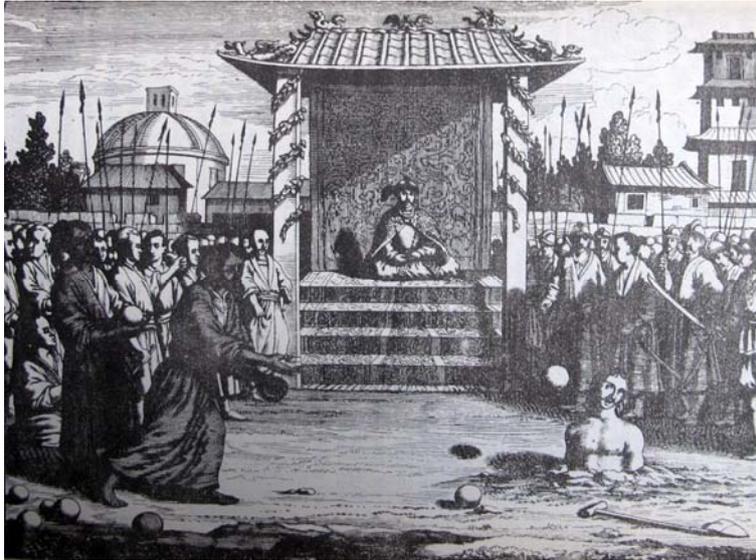


Figure 6.15. Engraving of “The Execution of Virasundara by Rajasingha,” from Phillipus Baldaeus, *A True and Exact Description of the Great Island of Ceylon*, Amsterdam, 1672.

In respect to the representation of Chinese figures, unlike the Paris manuscript which actually has no drawings showing ordinary Chinese people going about their everyday business,³¹⁸ the printed book in 1665 contains twenty-one engravings of Chinese figures from different social classes—farmers, priests, monks, soldiers, officials, and the like—and showing details of their costumes and customs.³¹⁹ Although the engravings in the printed book offer a survey of all types of Chinese people, it is noteworthy that most of them are depicted in one specific pattern: the same figure is usually displayed from different angles. At first glance one can see

³¹⁸ Among the eighty-one drawings in the manuscript, only five of them are on the subject of Chinese figures. These drawings present Chinese Buddhist statues (two drawings), Chinese people either at the top (Chinese officials, two drawings) or at the bottom (beggars and buskers, one drawing) of society. There are no drawings, however, showing ordinary Chinese people going about their everyday business.

³¹⁹ As they appear nowhere in the manuscript, it is uncertain whether these additional figures in the printed book were made on the basis of Nieuhof’s sketches.

four lamas (Tibetan Buddhist monks) in figure 6.16; but on closer examination, it is clear that these four lamas are actually the same person shown from the front, the left and right sides, and the back. This is a pictorial strategy commonly used in seventeenth-century Dutch travelogues in order to offer a full view of the figures and their clothing. In this way, rather than playing a role within a narrative of lived activity, these figures become a type that stands for a cultural whole. In order to be linked with their social context, they are arranged in a geographically specific spatial background. As we can see in this engraving, the lama stands in an open field while the distant background is filled with a city wall, a pagoda, and a watchtower, all of which obviously are associated with his social status. In this sense, these settings are no longer simple landscape scenes, but are more precisely delineated in order to show the specific context of these figures. Chinese figures wearing bizarre customs and standing in the fanciful environment as illustrated in the printed book reflect the European's curiosity and interest in the exotic and the extraordinary of their day.³²⁰

³²⁰ See Dematte and Reed, 15.



Figure 6.16. Copper engraving from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

This is even more apparent in the frontispiece (fig. 6.17) which reveals the particular style and exotic characteristic of these illustrations.³²¹ In this engraving, the emperor sits on a throne decorated with strange tiger- and dragon-headed animals. His left arm rests upon a globe showing China and indicating that he is the emperor of China. He is attired in a heavily decorated robe, and wears a fur cap with two peacock feathers and a long necklace around his neck, and he is sentencing four criminals who kneel or lie on the stairs in front of him. Around the emperor stand his courtiers with swords and wearing garments similar to the emperor's; like him, they all sport moustaches.

³²¹ This engraving has also been discussed in Corbett, "The Dutch Mission to Peking in 1655," 131–36.



Figure 6.17. Frontispiece of J. Nieuhof *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

The highly detailed representation of the scene, such as the physiognomy of Chinese people, the exotic pattern and decoration of their clothes and the Chinese-style trial, not only presents the exoticism of this oriental country to the European reader, but also creates a vivid setting, as if the reader is witnessing the event. And this, to a large extent, reflects the remarkable character of the illustrations highlighted in the title's claim, that they are all drawn from life in China (*na't leven in Sina getekent*).

However, the figure on the throne is not a representation of the Chinese emperor drawn from life, and the setting does not reflect the Chinese imperial court either. Although the Dutch embassy was eventually given an

audience with the emperor, Nieuhof did not have an opportunity to observe him or his court. As he relates in the Paris manuscript, “the ambassadors and the afore-mentioned ambassador were led to a lofty platform, but we remained below. [...] We looked around eagerly to see the Emperor, but he was hidden behind [a screen], in the Chinese manner; nobody should look at him when His Majesty sits on his throne. (Haar E.^s wierden met de voornoemde ambassadeur op een verheven toneel geleid, doch wij bleven beneden. [...] Wij zagen vast om end om na de keyzer, doch hij was verborgen na de wijze der Chijnezen, die niemand zien mach, wanneer zij in haar majesteit op den koninglijken troon zitten.)”³²²

The description of this occasion is more detailed in the published book, which reads as follow:

The embassadours themselves discerned nothing of him but a little of his Face; [...] We endeavour’d what we could to get a sight of the Emperor in his Throne as he sat in state, but the crowd of his Courtiers about him was such, that it eclipsed him from us in all his Glory. [...] On each side of the Throne stood forty of his Majestier Life Guard [...] These hindered the Embassadours from seeing the Emperour, Jacob Keijser observed the emperor to look back after them, and for as much as he could discern of him, he was young and of fair complexion.³²³

³²² Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden van een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 53.

³²³ Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 118–19.

According to this account, only the ambassadors observed a very little of the Chinese emperor's face and it is very likely that Nieuhof had no opportunity at all to see the emperor. Moreover, in the Paris manuscript, there is no drawing showing the Chinese emperor, which suggests that this portrait of the Chinese emperor was very likely made by the engravers on the basis of Nieuhof's drawings of some other figure, such as the old viceroy of Canton (see fig. 4.1).

In fact, this portrait has itself been carefully refined in the printed book. As discussed previously, Nieuhof's drawing of the viceroy was based on direct observation, but the representation of the details is very rough, especially in respect of the background. According to the accompanying description, the official sits on a 'square seat, covered with a curious carpet.' Judging from the spatial relationship between the column in the background and the carpet in the foreground, the carpet seems to be floating in mid-air rather than lying on a seat on the ground.

This unrealistic background setting was apparently unacceptable to the engravers, so they made certain alterations. As we can see, in the corresponding engraving (fig. 6.18) the seat is set on a square platform. The carpet covering the seat seems much larger and softer while the column, which works as a reference showing the position of the seat in the drawing, is replaced by a row of officials seated in front of a draped cloth. Even though all these alterations are intended to create a more convincing spatial arrangement, the background still looks like a stage set rather than the interior of a real Chinese house.



Figure 6.18. Portrait of Shang Kexi from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

Unlike many of the engravings illustrating Chinese plants, animals, and people that are derived from other sources, although the representations of Chinese architecture, cities, and towns do not necessarily share exactly the same design or refer to the same object, they are still closely connected to the drawings in the manuscript. As discussed above, these engravings were probably made on the basis of the drawings in the Paris manuscript, or the original sketches made by Nieuhof on site, or both. Generally speaking, the engravers adopted three approaches to produce engravings with designs similar to those of the drawings in the manuscript.

The first approach, often applied to Chinese architecture, was to simply copy the design from the aforementioned sources. For instance, figure 6.19 presents a nine-storey pagoda taking a dominant position to the right of center. Crowned with a finial, it has the classic, gradually-tiered eaves from which bells are suspended. With these characteristics, this pagoda is very

impressive. But it is notable that although this pagoda is named “BY LINOING” as shown in the engraving, it bears a strong resemblance to the well-known Porcelain Pagoda shown in the drawing of the Bao’en temple (see fig. 4.33). The great resemblance in their form strongly suggests that there must be a close relationship between them—that this pagoda might be more or less a copy of the Porcelain Pagoda in Nanjing.



Figure 6.19. Copper engraving from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

However, the engravers were doubtless aware that such a simple, unvarnished repetition might arouse doubt about the trustworthiness of these engravings in the mind of the perspicacious reader. Therefore, to evade such invidious criticism, a more commonly used approach in producing extra engravings was to collect various elements from different drawings in the Paris manuscript and rearrange them to create new pictures of China. The engraving of the town of Pekkinga (fig. 6.20) is an interesting example of this approach. In this engraving, the foreground is taken up by raised ground

on which stand two huge palm trees and a group of figures. In the middle ground, a meandering path leads downhill towards the city in the distance while three wheat-fields occupy the right side. A number of Chinese buildings and a pagoda are located at the foot of the mountains in the background. The first impression of the whole scene is convincing and harmonious, especially considering the Chinese figures in typical costume in the foreground and the buildings displaying their classical Chinese architectural features in the background. However, a closer look at the composition of this image and its individual components reveals a different case regarding the working process and the credibility of this engraving.



Figure 6.20. Engraving “Pekingsa” from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

First, the way of handling the foreground is typical of seventeenth-century Dutch landscape artists. By engraving the foreground more densely to give it more ink, the engraver separates the middle ground

in both the geographical and psychological sense. In fact, the foreground gives the impression that this is where Nieuhof was standing to observe the townscape, while the group of Chinese figures constitutes an audience that witnesses the whole scene. Such an approach is commonly found in the landscape paintings and prints of, for instance, Frans Post. In many of his paintings of Brazil, Post showed raised ground in the extreme foreground, creating a stage on which to display the exotic flora and fauna of a foreign land, as can be seen in figure 6.12. Instead of those Brazilian curiosities, the foreground of the engraving of Pekkinga has a group of Chinese figures and some tall trees on raised ground that is strongly reminiscent of Post's composition. This foreground is not necessarily part of the real scene that Nieuhof beheld; instead, rather like a stage set, it seems more likely to have been added to create a fanciful yet more credible effect.

The artificial composition of this engraving becomes even more obvious when the viewer's line of vision turns to the middle ground, which is divided into two parts by a meandering path along which a number of people are strolling. On the left side of the path is a plain and on its right side are three fields of wheat. The sinuous form of this path is very reminiscent of that illustrated in folio 199 (picture *d* in fig. 6.20.1), which also appears in the middle of the picture and leads to the city in the background. These three fields of wheat seem very specific, but they can also be discovered in the drawing folio 120 (fig. 6.20.1(e)). Behind these fields, there are three pieces of grotesque rockery. While being amazed by the fanciful shape and size, people would immediately recall the rockeries depicted in the manuscript drawing (fig. 6.20.1(f)) the shape of which is identical. Directly copied from the drawing, these rockeries are inserted in the open field just at the foot of a group of huge mountains, which can be

found in the manuscript drawings, including folio 40 (6.20.1(b)). Last but not least, glimpsing the Chinese buildings in the background, the viewer will again feel a sense of déjà vu, because the pagoda on the left closely resembles the Porcelain Pagoda and the other two-storey buildings all bear the typical Chinese design of up-turned eaves.

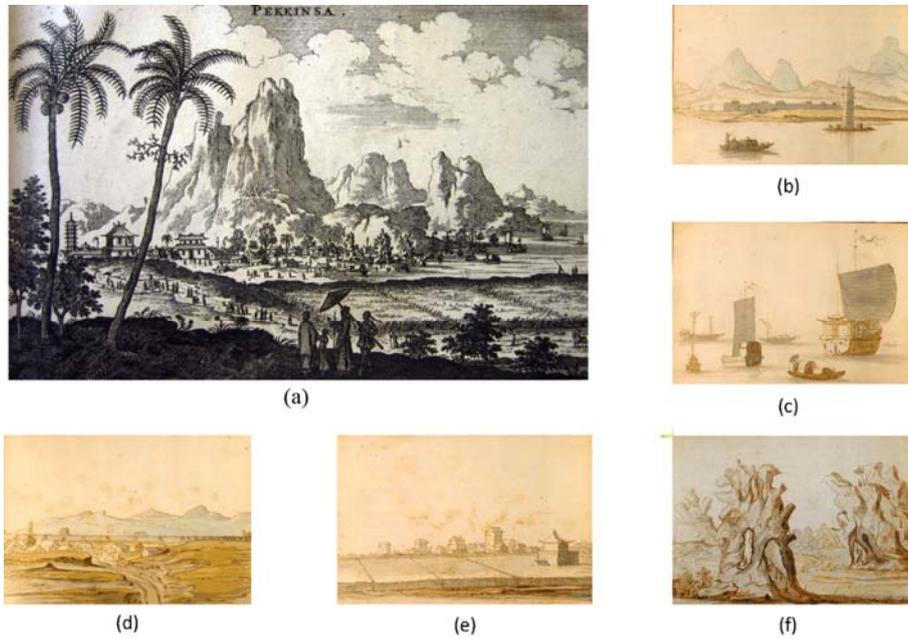


Figure 6.20.1. Comparison between the engraving in the printed book and the drawings in the Paris manuscript.

After a close examination of each individual component of this engraving, it becomes quite obvious that, although there is no corresponding drawing of the town of Pekingsa in the Paris manuscript, the design of this engraving borrows liberally from different drawings. Based on this finding, the engravers' working procedure may be probably went something like this: they first extracted some typical elements from different drawings or the original sketches made by Nieuhof, and then inserted them in a well thought

out, reasonable place so as to invent a new image of Chinese city and town. Because these elements all have typical Chinese characteristics, the newly invented image still has the sense of naturalness and it will not have stirred reader's doubts about its authenticity.

Another way of producing extra engravings was simply to make things up. In this approach, engravers did not restrict themselves to borrowing from Chinese sources; they also incorporated purely Western components to create a visual fantasy of this mysterious land. An interesting example is the arch in Canton shown in figure 6.21. In the printed book, Nieuhof gives the following detailed description of the first arch he came across:

Here also are several triumphal arches, which have been erected to the honour of such as have done their country service. They are no small ornament to the place; for from the water-gate, going directly on to the King's palace, I counted in that lane only, no less than thirteen stately triumphal arches made of hewn stone, which are so set out with figures and inscriptions in caved work, that all who behold them, admire them as wonders.

And this being one of the greatest and most considerable ornaments wherewith the Chinese adorn their cities, I have for the better demonstration of the workmanship, set before you the following printed draught of one of them, that you may take a full view of every part, and so to judge of all the rest, which are generally built after one and the same fashion.

These arches are commonly built with three stories, so artificially, that we may very well say that neither wit nor ingenuity was wanting in their contrivance. Round about the

pillars, and in other places, were writ several Chinese characters, and also cut several flowers, beasts, birds, and other curious ornaments, as I suppose, emblematical.³²⁴



Figure 6.21. Copper engraving from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

Corresponding to the description in the text, the arch in the engraving consists of carved boards proclaiming its purpose, four typically Chinese upturned eaves, and eight large pillars far above the ground, most of them fully decorated with unrecognizable patterns. With its eaves, boards, and decorations, this arch does resemble a traditional Chinese arch to a certain extent. However, its enormous size and strange structure—which seems to be two arches pushed together each with four pillars and one half of the top part—is a far cry from a traditional Chinese arch, an example of which can

³²⁴ Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 37.

be seen in figure 5.18. Moreover, its position in the middle of a square is not in keeping with Chinese custom, because traditionally Chinese arches are erected in the middle of the street for people to pass through, which intensifies their spiritual function. Moving on to look at the spacious square, it is not like a traditional Chinese square which is usually in a form of a courtyard; it is instead much more after the fashion of a European square, like the Waag, or weighing house, on the Dam Square in front of what was then the Amsterdam Town Hall (now the Royal Palace), as shown in the painting *The Dam in Amsterdam* by Gerrit Berckheyde (1638–1698, fig. 6.22).



Figure 6.22. Gerrit Berckheyde, “The Dam in Amsterdam,” 1697, 41 x 55,5 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.

Summing up these findings about a Chinese arch depicted in this way, the following questions present themselves: Is this indeed a Chinese arch? And, how did the engravers come up with the designs they did? One interesting detail throws some light on these questions. Close observation

shows that on the top board of the arch it is possible to discern that the inscription is not in Chinese characters. The letters can be made out to be “IHS,” a monogram of an abbreviation of the name of Jesus as it is written in Greek (ΙΗΣΥΣ).³²⁵ As a symbol of the Christian church, it is incredible that this inscription would appear on a seventeenth-century Chinese arch. The only plausible explanation for this unexpected monogram is that the engravers created what they imagined a Chinese arch would look like and capped it with a familiar religious emblem. Curiously a statue appears on top of the arch in the British copy (fig. 6.23). This is obviously an armed Western hero.³²⁶ It would seem that this engraving was composed by the engravers who created an arch containing some Chinese and some Western characteristics.



Figure 6.23. Drawing of a triumphal arch in Canton in the British Library, Add Mss. 5253.

³²⁵ A. Hauck, “Jesus Christ, Monogram of,” *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, edited by Philip Schaff, 6.168.

³²⁶ This edition is reserved in the British Library and the manuscript number is Ms Add. 5253.

Conclusion

As the discussions in this chapter demonstrates, the engravings in the first Dutch edition and the drawings in the Paris manuscript are closely related, not only because many of them have a similar design, but also on account of their common components. Confronting the rough depictions in the drawings, the engravers would only have made corrections to those details that apparently ran counter to common understanding and Western pictorial convention. However, hampered by a lack of knowledge about China, they could not go far towards making any fundamental improvements. Therefore, most of their refinements consist of making more clearly delineated images and adding embellishments; but they were actually more concerned with aesthetics and creating a natural-looking effect in support of the “na het leven” claim.

Chapter 7 Chinoiserie Works Inspired by Nieuhof's Images of China

Before the invention of photography in the early nineteenth century, the image of China in the West was determined mainly by the decorative pictures found on Chinese objects exported to Europe from the sixteenth century onwards, and by the representations of its landscape and people produced by European travellers. Shaped by these pictures and representations, an artistic style known as chinoiserie (Chinese-esque) took root in Europe in the mid-1600s and reached its peak a century later, providing Europeans with a hybrid understanding of the image of China. Compared with the objects imported from China, which were largely confined to the decorative arts such as porcelain, lacquerware, and textiles, and to a lesser extent Chinese “high” art, such as that produced by members of the literati and court painters, the representations by European travellers were especially influential in the evolution of chinoiserie. Therefore when considering issues regarding Europeans’ adoption of Chinese imagery in seventeenth century art and design, we must pay attention to European travellers’ representations of China, among which Nieuhof’s images of China play an important role.

The “na het leven” claim of *Het Gezantschap* was to a large extent responsible for its becoming a standard source for visual images of China for a long time.³²⁷ The assertion that the images were from life was ample reason for artists and designers to draw on Nieuhof’s work for their inspiration, especially as there were few other ways they could approach an

³²⁷ See Dematte and Reed, *China on Paper*, 142.

understanding of the forms and principles of Chinese art and architecture. The inspiration they derived from the illustrations can be discovered in subsequent publications about China, in architecture, in various decorative arts from interior decoration, wallpaper, and furniture to porcelain, lacquerware, and textiles.³²⁸

As “a touchstone for books of China,” Nieuhof’s book and especially the pictorial information it contained were eagerly seized upon and used by scholars as a primary source of visual information on China for about one and a half centuries.³²⁹ As Oliver Impey has argued, chinoiserie is a European manifestation of a mixture of various oriental styles with rococo, baroque, and so on, and the origins of the chinoiserie cannot be easily traced to a single source,³³⁰ the influence of the illustrations in Nieuhof’s book on China are traceable and their impact on European art and the evolution of chinoiserie is widely accepted. The European craftsman copied and used the illustrations in Nieuhof’s book in part or in whole, in various forms of art.

The chinoiserie styles inspired by the illustrations in Nieuhof’s book began with direct imitation or simple copying. The freely decorated chinoiserie rooms greatly favoured by many European monarchs offer an interesting example. In 1663–65, for example, Frederik III of Denmark had a room in Slot Rosenborg, Copenhagen, decorated with chinoiserie in lacquer set with turquoise and mother-of-pearl. It was executed by the Dutch artist Francis de Bray, and many of its motifs derived from the engravings in *Het Gezantschap*, notably the Chinese dragon boat depicted on a dark green

³²⁸ There are a lot of examples showing how chinoiserie designs are copied from the illustrations in Nieuhof’s book of China. See Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 175–80; Anna Jolly, *A Taste for the Exotic: Foreign Influences on Early Eighteenth-Century Silk Designs* (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2007), 45; Dematte and Reed, *China on Paper*, 10–18.

³²⁹ Dematte and Reed, *China on Paper*, 13.

³³⁰ Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 10.

panel (fig. 7.1).³³¹ The similarities between this and the dragon boat in *Het Gezantschap* (fig. 7.2) are self-evident, not only with respect to the shape and decoration of the boat, but also the figures on it, especially the one with long plumes standing on the prow. Francis de Bray directly imitated the design of the illustrations in Nieuhof's book to create a Chinese atmosphere for this room.

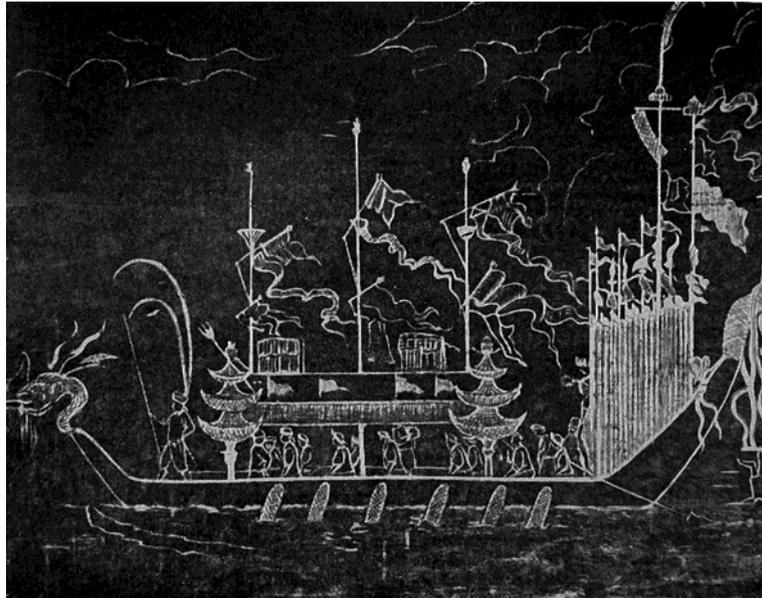


Figure 7.1. Francis de Bray, “Chinese dragon boat in the lacquer room in Slot Rosenborg,” Copenhagen, 1665.

³³¹ This piece of lacquer has been discussed by Honour in his book *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay*, 45. But he did not point out the relationship between these junks and Nieuhof's illustrations. Oliver Impey has also mentioned that many motifs illustrated in this room are taken from Nieuhof's book, see Impey, *Chinoiserie*, 166. However, according to him, it is an edition of 1635, twenty years before the Dutch embassy visited China.

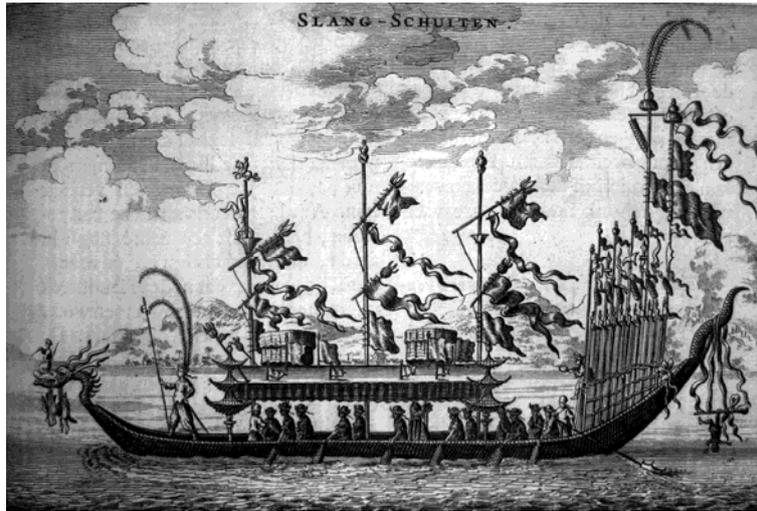


Figure 7.2. Copper engraving of Chinese dragon boat from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

How Nieuhof's design of the "Porcelain Pagoda" in the city Nanjing exercised much influence on European architects is well known. The real thing was a nine-storey pagoda constructed of glazed and painted tiles and crowned with a golden pineapple. Nieuhof must have made a number of elaborated drawings of this pagoda, for it is not only the main theme of two two-page engravings (one of them is shown in fig. 7.3) but it frequently appears in a number of other cityscapes. An impressive masterpiece, it has been regarded as "the Chinese building best known in Europe."³³² This exotic pagoda was imitated far and wide, not only in publications and interior decorations, but also quite often in European gardens, especially in the eighteenth century.³³³ The pagoda in Kew Gardens (fig. 7.4) built in

³³² Patrick Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 17.

³³³ The first appreciative account of Chinese architecture, *Entwurf einer historischen Architektur*, published in 1721 by Fischer von Erlach, relied for its illustrations principally on the engravings in Nieuhof's book. See Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay*, 21; also see Lothar Ledderose,

1761 by Sir William Chambers (1723–1796) and replicas in many other European gardens such as Munich's Englischer Garten and the castles of Sanssouci (1770) and Chanteloup (1775–78) all show how designers followed Nieuhof's prototypes.³³⁴

In this case, the European copies were not true facsimiles, as the materials used were quite different (the pagodas in European gardens were not decorated with porcelain); only its basic shape was similar. It was usually impossible for a European craftsman to make an object in a purely oriental style without any stamp of his own period or nationality and without some misunderstanding of the Chinese original. Often, the craftsman intentionally mixed different oriental styles to create a new image of China that suited his own taste.

"Chinese Influence on European Art, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in *China and Europe: Images and Influences in Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Thomas H. C. Lee (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press of Hong Kong, 1991), 232.

³³⁴ In his *Designs of Chinese Buildings*, William Chamber provided accurate drawings of Chinese buildings including Chinese pagoda. But his own design was not adopted when he built the pagoda in Kew Gardens; by contrast, he used the design of the Bao'en porcelain pagoda that appears in Nieuhof's book. See Ledderose, "Chinese Influence on European Art, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," 233–34. But Hugh Honour probably did not compare the pagoda in Kew Gardens with the illustration of the porcelain pagoda in Nieuhof's book of China as he thought this pagoda was not modelled on any particular oriental prototype. See Honour, *Chinoiserie*, 155. Oliver Impey traces the prototype of the pagoda in Kew Gardens to a pagoda in the background of the engraving of the city Canton (Kanton); see Impey, *Chinoiserie*, 146.

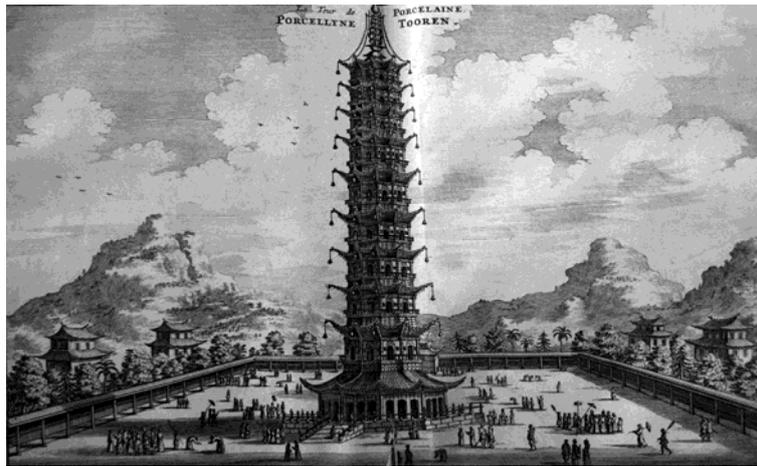


Figure 7.3. Copper engraving of the Bao'en Pagoda from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).



Figure 7.4. Pagoda in Kew Gardens in London.

In fact, over time as more and more European designers looked to Nieuhof's illustrations for inspiration, they quite often went far beyond

Nieuhof's original presentations of China. No longer satisfied with Nieuhof's prototype, they extracted various Chinese elements from different sources and dealt with them in a western manner to invent imaginary scenes of a mysterious Far East. The example of figure 7.5 gives a good idea of how far Dutch potters went in reinterpreting Nieuhof's image of China and eventually created a completely novel Oriental fantasy.



Figure 7.5. Plaque with chinoiserie decoration; 63 x 92 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1680–1700.

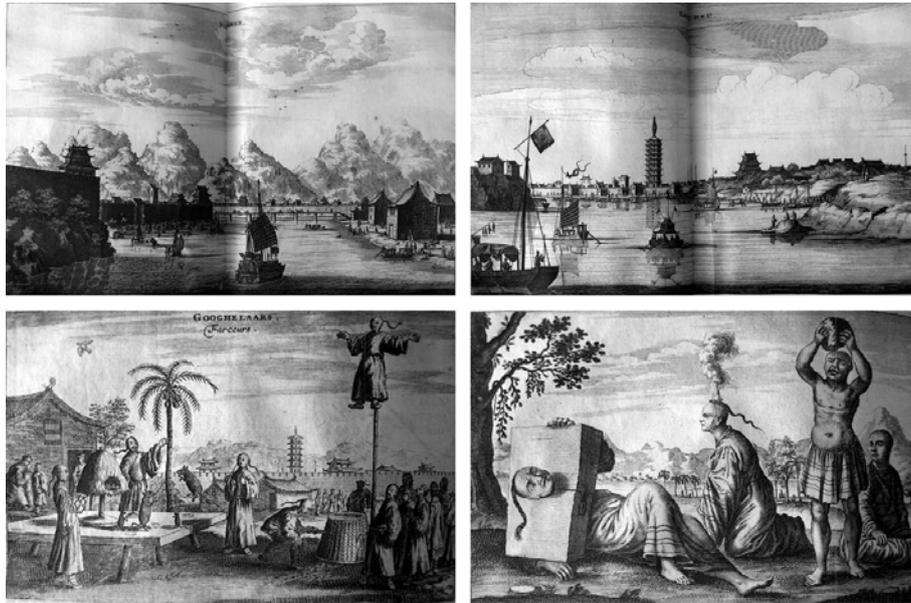


Figure 7.6. Copper engraving from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

It is a wall decoration, a plaque (a large tile) of Delftware pottery, painted by an unknown artist at the end of the seventeenth century. Decorated in blue and white, this plaque pictures a festive view of life in China: a river full of pleasure boats and happy people and circus attractions on the riverbank, which is also filled with oversized flowers, craggy rocks, dwarf trees, and fancy birds. The potter was very familiar with *Het Gezantschap*, because many of the motifs are derived directly from the engravings in the book (fig. 7.6), including the boats, the man striking his bare head against a stone, the man supporting a long pole atop which another man is standing, the city wall and tower on the left side, and the pagodas located here and there. Instead of simply copying one single print from *Het Gezantschap*, however, the potter extracted a number of Chinese elements from different illustrations and combined them into one pastiche.

In the process he created a new, more fanciful image of China that not only adopts Nieuhof's landscape settings and figures but also includes Japanese figures, Indonesian palm trees, and Scandinavian pine trees. People must have enjoyed such fanciful compositions, for such combinations met their expectations of and curiosity about this mysterious country. Incidentally, the Dutch audience would further gain some familiarity with the various flowers, plants, and animals taken from unknown sources and displayed in the foreground to frame the picture in a typical Dutch pictorial convention.

Although it is a mixture of various far-flung elements, this plaque sticks to Nieuhof's original concept of China. There are some other art works, however, that go well beyond Nieuhof's prototype. A remarkable example is one of the great tapestries of the *Tenture chinoise* set known as *The Audience of the Emperor* (fig. 7.7), which was made at Beauvais from designs by François Boucher.³³⁵ This tapestry is an attempt to not simply depict an oriental subject, but to apply chinoiserie to a European one. The enthroned emperor closely copies the depiction on the title page from *Het Gezantschap* (see fig. 6.17). The magnificent setting, the prostrate courtiers, and exotic animals and flowers that surround him all show the power and glory of the sovereign, whether it is the Emperor of China or the King of France. As such, it bears witness to the carrying over of the Chinese imperial splendour in Nieuhof's prints to a theatrical stage-setting of chinoiserie based on European baroque court models.

³³⁵ This tapestry is also discussed in Impey, *Chinoiserie*, 73.



Figure 7.7. “The Audience of the Emperor,” after the designs by François Boucher, 1725–30.

As we can see, chinoiserie thus starts by direct imitation and the combination of classical Chinese-style elements, but later develops with further alteration from its prototypes to a more European-oriented style. The designs were often taken somewhat loosely from engravings of different countries. In the process, China was accorded in the first Dutch edition certain “odd” contents and characteristics, and little regard was given to the original designs, pictorial themes, or subjects represented. These objects were much appreciated when they were placed into European surroundings, with some exotic seasoning, which made everything even more fantastic and amazing. In this sense, objects in chinoiserie designs produced a feeling of a likeness of China on the basis of Chinese pictorial elements and Western imagination.

Although chinoiserie designs deviated increasingly from the prototype provided by Nieuhof’s illustrations, these continued to be regarded as

“standard visual sources for images that defined China for Europeans.”³³⁶ It is generally accepted that Nieuhof’s illustrations of China are quite different in intent and execution from the chinoiserie style they inspired because they are not artificial hybrids of various elements, but instead more or less reliable representations based on Nieuhof’s eyewitness observation.

In my opinion, however, the relationship between Nieuhof’s illustrations of China and the chinoiserie style is far more complicated than the above opinion. Many examples discussed in chapter 6 may be used to explain this point, but here I would like to give a simple example, an ordinary townscape illustrated in *Het Gezantschap*. This townscape (fig. 7.8) represents the countryside of Joeswoe (Hexiwu, 河西务), a small town near Peking. In this illustration, a broad canal extends towards the background where the city wall emerges, the left bank is occupied by a vast wheat field, and several rows of native dwellings with exotic roofs stand on the right bank. The Chinese junk with the envoys on board is shown in the foreground. All these detailed and vivid representations offer the viewers an impression that this townscape is taken from life. However, a critical examination reveals many extraordinary details that suggest otherwise. The enormous palm trees on the banks are not found in northern China, where it is far too cold for them to survive.³³⁷ Such motifs do not improve the

³³⁶ Dematte and Reed, *China on Paper*, 142; also see Adrian Hsia, *The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1998), 11.

³³⁷ Johan Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*, 46: “The ambassadors had hired a very brave vessel to themselves, having procured fifty more at the Emperor’s charge, to carry their followers, presents, and goods...It was thought unadvisable to bring our great ships any higher up the river, we left them at Canton, under the command of Francis Lansman.” A similar account can be found in the manuscript: “Den 17e martij gingen Haar E.^s van Canton met een vloot van omtrent vijftigh vaartuigen t’zeil om onze reyze na Pekin te vervorderen.” See Blussé and Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs Beelden Van Een Chinareis 1655–1657*, 35.

specific quality of this townscape but rather undermine Nieuhof's credibility. Given that the palm tree often represented the exotic to Dutch audiences in the seventeenth century, it may be reasonable to speculate that the purpose of adding this was to enhance the attraction of this foreign and mysterious country and, indeed, to further identify it as such.



Figure 7.8. Copper engraving from J. Nieuhof, *Het Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, etc.* (Amsterdam, 1665).

In this respect, if we say one of the essential features of chinoiserie is to imitate and compose Chinese elements to create “China-like” images and do not care much about the reliability of what it represents, the illustrations of China in Nieuhof's book themselves should also be considered examples of chinoiserie. More precisely, these illustrations not only provide materials for the later chinoiserie designs, they themselves qualify as prototypes of chinoiserie. In this sense, we may say that they are at once the origin and the precursor of chinoiserie.

Unlike the drawings in the Paris manuscript or the engravings in the printed book, chinoiserie mainly reflects Europeans' ideas of what eastern objects did or should look like, rather than the "na het leven" representations of China. Because the innumerable oriental objects imported to Europe were in a very wide range of styles showing various arts of different eastern countries, according to Oliver Impey, "this resulted in a very wide range of chinoiserie styles in Europe, for not only were there these different styles to imitate, but the European craftsman was perfectly happy to mix together quite dissimilar ideas from quite distinct origins."³³⁸ In this sense, to represent China as it really looked like was never the primary aim of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century producers of chinoiserie.

³³⁸ Impey, *Chinoiserie*, 10.

Conclusion

The Illusion of Verisimilitude

Throughout this study, I have analysed images of China in Europe in the seventeenth century through the art of China made by Johan Nieuhof on the visit of the first Dutch embassy to China in 1655–57, and the reproductions made on the basis of his sketches. My analysis involves mainly the drawings in the Paris manuscript, the engravings in the first Dutch edition in 1665, and later works of chinoiserie inspired by the engravings. These three are closely related as the numerous designs and subjects in the more than 150 engravings provided considerable inspiration for later chinoiserie works, while the drawings in the Paris manuscript are either the source for the engravings, or are based on the same original sketches made by Nieuhof on spot. Some people who had the opportunity to see China with their own eyes questioned the claim that Nieuhof's representations of China in the engravings were “na het leven”, or drawn from life. Careful study of the drawings in the Paris manuscript can tell us to what extent the engravings were modified by the engravers and, more important, how Dutch pictorial conventions of the seventeenth century influenced artists' representations of China. Taken together these show what kinds of images of China were represented to the European audience in the seventeenth century and how the engravers and craftsman dealt with these representations to create exotic and even fantastic images of China.

On the basis of Leonard Blussé's research into the historical background of the first Dutch embassy visit to China and the Paris manuscript, I first introduced the related background for a deeper

understanding of Nieuhof's images of China. Following that, I discussed Nieuhof's personal interest and occupations especially after his journey in China. According to his accounts recorded in various sources, he spent most of his adventurous life exploring the world and trade business. Apparently, making drawings and publishing his travelogues was initially not his main concern, but after the success of his China book he relished making drawings of many places he visited. I also described briefly the Dutch envoys' experience and route in China.

The manuscript's appearance and content suggest that it was a reproduction made after Nieuhof's return to Holland rather than a work made by Nieuhof on the spot during his travels in China. Scholars hold different opinions about whether the authorship of the Paris manuscript, particularly the drawings, should be attributed to Nieuhof. To investigate this issue, I compared the Paris manuscript with other works made by Nieuhof including two maps of Saint Helena and the handwriting found in different works attributed to him. The analysis from different points of view demonstrates that the Paris manuscript came from the same hand as other works more definitely written by Nieuhof. Moreover, the archive of the VOC's ship logs confirms the consistency and accuracy of Nieuhof's accounts in different sources. The weight of the evidence convincingly shows that Nieuhof did make the Paris manuscript during his stay in Amsterdam in 1658.

In order to make a thorough study of the Paris manuscript, I started from an analysis of the text, which mainly recorded the Dutch envoys' journey in China. Because the Dutch envoys did not linger long enough to become familiar with the cities and towns they passed through, and also because they were often confined to their lodgings, Nieuhof's description of

Chinese cities and towns has limitations. Moreover, he often makes analogies with things familiar to his Western readers. Even so, a comparison with Chinese chorography shows that most of his descriptions are based on direct observation. His choice of narrative subjects reflects his sense of humour, curiosity, and interests, and his vivid descriptions demonstrate his empathy for people who suffered because of the civil war. Therefore, his account is more like a diary recording the envoys' daily activities, sceneries, anecdotes, and so forth. It shows that Nieuhof was emotionally involved in his description of China. This is especially evident when we compare Nieuhof's account in the Paris manuscript with the ambassadors' official report to the VOC. The latter records similar activities and experiences, thus confirming the credibility of Nieuhof's account, but it concerns rather the Company's commercial and political interests in China, which made it confidential. Therefore, when the publisher Jacob van Meurs published the travelogue of the first Dutch embassy visit to China, he could not borrow from the contents of this report. A reasonable explanation for the much more detailed account in the printed book is that Nieuhof had made a comprehensive set of drawings during the embassy's visit to China, but when he made the Paris manuscript he chose only those items he thought interesting and necessary for his purpose.

Regarding the drawings in the Paris manuscript, I first discussed their themes and working procedure. The working procedure shows that the drawings were usually first depicted in chalk and pencil, after which the preliminary contour was redrawn in pen and ink. In many drawings, however, the depiction in pencil/chalk and the depiction in pen show different intentions. A comprehensive analysis of the depictions in pencil/chalk and pen suggests that the sources of the Paris manuscript,

namely, the original sketches made by Nieuhof on site, were very coarse sketches and that he needed to recompose the images of China when he produced the Paris manuscript. To show what kind of images of China could be made by a professional draftsman, I compared Nieuhof's work with Pieter van Doornik's later drawings of China. The comparison suggests that Nieuhof was not a professional draftsman, which in turn raises the question about how the drawings in the Paris manuscript were produced.

As the essential claim of the drawings in the Paris manuscript and the engravings in the printed book is that they are made "na het leven," my study of how these drawings were produced starts from the perspective of "na het leven" in the context of Dutch pictorial convention in the seventeenth century. There are primarily two essential aspects of the seventeenth-century concept "na het leven": first, the depictions are made on the basis of direct observation; second, the artists are permitted to add some imaginary elements or select and compose elements for a natural and harmonious representation.

Based on these two characteristics of the "from life" convention and the analysis of the working procedure, I first studied the drawings with specific and clear preliminary depictions in pencil and chalk to see if they were based on direct observation. I divided them into four categories, including the representation of Chinese people and their costume, grotesque rockeries and hills, historical events, and boats. Their resemblance to the actual scenery and Chinese pictorial material suggests that the representations of these subjects are reliable and that Nieuhof made them on the basis of direct observation. Moreover, it is possible that some specific depictions in pencil and chalk may have been based on Chinese pictorial material to which Nieuhof might have had access, as well. As in the seventeenth century, most

European people's impression of China was mainly derived from the exquisite decorations on Chinese objects exported to Europe, and copying this Chinese pictorial material may also be regarded as a kind of "direct observation."

To render a sense of naturalness to the drawings, especially those of Chinese cityscapes, Nieuhof further refined them in pen. To examine the extent to which these refinements reflect the topographical features of the actual scenes, I compared some of the drawings with Chinese maps. The comparison suggests that although many cityscapes were observed directly from boats on the river during the Dutch envoys journey, they often do not reflect the actual layout of the city. In order to figure out how these drawings were then made, I gave an examples of how Dutch artists of the seventeenth century composed cityscapes and analysed how the principles of Dutch landscape composition were applied to representations of the Chinese landscape. Artists' reliance on familiar approaches to the rendering of landscapes gave their Western audience a familiar and comfortable feeling that made them more able to accept these images as being reliable representations of China. This feeling is reinforced by the representation of the components of the cityscapes, as most of them reflect Chinese characteristics and occasionally the actual situation. For some drawings of Chinese architecture and the like, Nieuhof adopted another approach to convey the sense of naturalness, with respect to which I discussed the drawings of the Forbidden City and a group of beggars. These drawings show that Nieuhof did make sketches but that he refined them with his own understanding of what he had seen or, after the fact, from memory. By doing so, the lifelike illusions of China were finally completed.

This approach is actually similar to the one adopted by the engravers when they dealt with their primary source, whether the rough sketches Nieuhof made on site or the drawings in the Paris manuscript, or both. In the engravings, the marks of direct observation in the engravings cannot be traced as easily as the marks in the drawing. The engravers' primary concern was to render a sense of naturalness by adding embellishments and exotic details. But most of their additions did not originate from eyewitness observation, but derived from Chinese or Dutch pictorial sources, or sometime the engravers' imagination. As such they do not offer a higher level of specificity than the drawings in the Paris manuscript. Moreover, to produce additional engravings of China, the engravers not only extracted various objects from different drawings in the Paris manuscript and composed them into one image, they also adopted subjects and images directly from other travel journals—even ones about other countries—and other Dutch pictures. The practice of re-cycling material without new information to enhance the phantasmal nature of the engravings was a time-honoured practice. The primary purpose of the engravings in the printed book was to meet the market's demand, and the engravers used whatever exotic illustrations of China served the purpose, even if they were pure invention. But this did not keep publishers from claiming that the illustrations of China are made "na het leven," which was a fashionable claim of the genre of Dutch travelogue in seventeenth century.

As I have discussed briefly, Karel van Mander's theory of landscape maintains that the representation of landscape should be rooted in the study of reality and that the aim of the landscape is to create the illusion of

verisimilitude.³³⁹ In the case of Nieuhof's images of China, there should be enough recognisable elements to give the reader an impression that the images of China are drawn from life; but these plausible elements should be selected and arranged in a harmonious composition in order to create a lifelike cityscape of China. This is actually what Nieuhof and the engravers attempted to do in the production of the drawings in the Paris manuscript and the engravings in the printed book. In that sense, the question of whether the drawings in the Paris manuscript and the engravings in the printed book were made "na het leven" cannot be simply answered by yes or no.

The principal audience of Nieuhof's printed book on China in the seventeenth century would be an educated reader full of curiosity about this country of myth and legend and eager to learn more about China without leaving home; leafing through this series of illustrations would have been like taking an imaginary walk in that country.³⁴⁰ To satisfy people's curiosity about faraway wonders, it is understandable that the engravings were not overly concerned about providing completely accurate topographical information, and great care was taken to enhance the exotic and fanciful nature of this remote and mysterious country.

This is exactly what the later chinoiserie style did. Chinoiserie begins with direct imitation and the combination of classical Chinese-style elements, but later develops with further alteration from its prototypes to be more Europe-oriented. On the basis of Nieuhof's images of China and other sources, chinoiserie developed more exotic images, mixing various Oriental forms with rococo, baroque, Gothic, and other European styles and various

³³⁹ Nguyen, *The Made Landscape: City and Country in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Prints*, 9.

³⁴⁰ About the reader's expectation of the landscape prints about foreign countries in the seventeenth century, see Freedberg, *Dutch Landscape Prints of the Seventeenth Century*, 15–16.

elements to create a European idea of what Oriental things are like, or ought to be like.³⁴¹ In the course of that process, China was embellished with “odd” characteristics, and little regard was paid to original designs, pictorial themes, or subjects. Chinoiserie objects were much appreciated when placed in European surroundings, and produced a feeling of a likeness of China that combined Chinese pictorial elements and Western imagination.

In this respect, the approach adopted by chinoiserie to imitate and compose Chinese elements to create “China-like” images was very similar to the way in which the engravings in the printed book were produced. All of them tried for the “exotic” at large and cared little about accurate representation. In this sense, the illustrations in the printed book should themselves be considered a kind of chinoiserie. More precisely, these images not only provide material for later chinoiserie designs, they themselves are also involved in chinoiserie design. In this sense, we may say that they are both the origin and the precursor of chinoiserie.

Although the drawings and engravings may have been added to a pictorial framework to cater to public expectations and potential market demand, judging from the selection of themes and the approaches to representing China, they reflect the influence of the Dutch travelogue and of the landscape and cityscape painting that flourished in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.

In this thesis, I have tried to keep an objective attitude in analysing Nieuhof’s work on China and hope to have made a contribution to the scholarship that builds on previous research, particularly in respect of the images of China in Europe in the seventeenth century, the way that Dutch travellers produced and published accounts of foreign countries, the origin

³⁴¹ Impey, *Chinoiserie*, 9.

and development of chinoiserie, and how Dutch artists made and conceived of “na het leven” images.

My study also has some limitations, especially regarding the authority of the Paris manuscript. My assumption is mainly based on the comparison of the extant works by Nieuhof. If the original sketches made by Nieuhof on the spot are found in the future, more comprehensive and thorough research into his representations of China can be made. It would be a pleasant dream for historians and art historians to rotate the rings of years and live under the same sky as their research subjects and witness the same historical moments, for then we would know and learn more about the past.

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Samenvatting

In deze studie worden de voorstellingen van China onderzocht die gemaakt zijn op basis van schetsen die de tekenaar Johan Nieuwhof maakte tijdens het bezoek van het ‘Eerste Gezantschap der Neerlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie’ aan China in de jaren 1655-57, in opdracht van de VOC. Het onderzoek betreft niet alleen de tientallen tekeningen die zich in het manuscript, bewaard in de Bibliothèque Nationale te Parijs bevinden, ook de gravures die in de eerste, in Amsterdam in 1665 gedrukte uitgave voorkomen. Deze gravures werden later de basis van de in Europa opkomende beweging die Chinoiserie wordt genoemd.

De analyse richt zich op de vraag welk soort voorstellingen van China Nieuwhof ons met zijn tekeningen en prenten die daar naar gemaakt zijn ons gegeven heeft, en hoe zijn aanspraak dat zij ‘naer het leven’ zouden zijn, te interpreteren is in de context van de Nederlandse, 17e-eeuwse picturale conventies. Aan de hand van een analyse van het Parijse manuscript en een vergelijking van de tekeningen met ander werk van Nieuwhof wordt de stelling verdedigd dat het Parijse manuscript in feite een reproductie is van Nieuwhof's hand gemaakt na zijn terugkeer in Nederland in 1658. Door vergelijking met het officiële gedrukte rapport van Ambassadeur Jacob Keijser en Chinese tekeningen uit die periode, wordt gesteld dat Nieuwhof's verslag gebaseerd is op zijn eigen observaties. De werkwijze van de tekenaar van het Parijse manuscript wordt onderzocht en vergeleken met de tekeningen die de tekenaar Pieter van Doornik in China maakte. De indruk dringt zich op dat Nieuwhof geen professional was maar een amateur die zijn best deed. Wat de tekeningen zelf betreft, deze worden eerst in de context

van de 'naer het leven' traditie besproken. De vergelijking van enige tekeningen met foto's van plaatsen waar Nieuhof is geweest, tonen aan dat deze tekeningen op directe observaties zijn gebaseerd en de grote overeenkomsten die deze soms met Chinese schilderijen vertonen doet het vermoeden rijzen dat Nieuhof over Chinees materiaal beschikte. Verder wordt betoogd dat Nieuhof in zijn weergave van het profiel van Chinese steden de Nederlandse picturale conventie volgde en het aanzicht van deze steden aanpaste, om niet te zeggen voor de Europese kijker verbeterde. Wat de gravures die naar zijn ontwerpen gemaakt zijn betreft: deze hebben niets met directe observatie van doen en geven geen betrouwbare of specifieke informatie over China. Om aan het westerse verwachtingspatroon van een ver gelegen land te beantwoorden zijn aan de gravures allerlei details toegevoegd waardoor een exotische atmosfeer op de lezer en kijker wordt overgebracht. De aanpak waarmee chinoiserieën zijn gemaakt hebben veel gemeen met de manier waarop de gravures zijn gemaakt; dus de conclusie is gewettigd dat de illustraties in Nieuhof's boek over China niet alleen de bron werden van de chinoiserie, de prenten zelf waren een van de eerste voorbeelden van chinoiserie in Europa in de 17e eeuw. Dit onderzoek pretendeert dan ook nieuw inzicht te geven in de wijze waarop enerzijds levendige teksten en anderzijds 'naer het leven' gemaakte illustraties in zorgvuldig geredigeerde Nederlandse reisverslagen een exotisch Chinabeeld introduceerde bij een breed Europees lezerspubliek.

Het onderzoek naar het "naer het leven"-aspect van de tekeningen en andere illustraties laten een ingewikkelder verhouding zien dan Nieuhof's verbeeldingen van China en de chinoiserie die daaruit voortkwam deed vermoeden.

Curriculum Vitae

Jing Sun was born on 27 December 1979 in Beijing, China. In 2002, she received a Bachelor degree and a Double Major from Peking University, where she studied advertising at the School of Journalism & Communication and economics at China Center for Economic Research respectively. Upon graduation, she went to Tsinghua University for her master program. After three years of study, she received a Master degree in the specialty of Art Theory from School of Humanities and Social Science of Tsinghua University in 2005. During her Master program, she also studied at Hong Kong Baptist University as an exchange student.

In the pursuit of more knowledge in Western art and its development, she came to Leiden University to study at the department of Art History as a PhD student sponsored by Chinese Scholarship Council in 2005. In 2006, she studied at art history department of University of California, Berkeley, as a visiting scholar. After returning to Leiden, she continued her research on the representations of China in Europe in the seventeenth century, the “na het leven” pictorial convention, and Chinoiserie in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was a prolonged process for unexpected reasons, but she managed to reach the final stage with the great support and help from Prof. J.L. Blussé, Dr. L. Tilanus and Prof. C.J.M. Zijlmans.

Since coming to Leiden, Jing Sun has published a few papers. Her recent publications are contributing to *The Search in 2012-The Exhibition of dGe vdun chos vphel* (Beijing, 2012) and *The Transformation of Vernacular Expression in Early Modern Arts*, (Leiden, 2011). She has also given academic papers at various conferences, including the College Art Association, Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities, New York Conference on Asian Studies.