

VOC Trade and Transport of Healing Herbs and Medicinal Cargo in the 16th and the 17th Century

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Abstract— This paper draws upon the history of the trade in medicinal plants, plant-based remedies, animal products as well as precious stones (used for medicinal purposes) from the South and Southeast Asia by the Dutch, along the routes of European commerce into societies across Europe, Asia, as well as Americas. Analysing the roots of the global spread of Asian remedies, it shows that medicinal cargoes and healing herbs became part of the lucrative trade because of their striking appeal, the might of centuries-old medical habits, and the progressively more reckonable use of many of these plants by the late eighteenth century. Undoubtedly, some of the drugs mentioned by van Rhee and other explorers of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries already found its way into Europe since the antiquity. Yet, the European expansion of the new world provided a space, where disease, medicine, age old healthcare practices and consumption habits got entangled to each other in such a-way that they became ‘global’ in its true sense. The subsequent discussion of this paper unravels this complex network of medicinal substances as it was during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Index Terms— VOC, Trade, Healing Herbs, Medicinal Cargo, Dutch East India Company.

I. INTRODUCTION

The imperative behind the VOC’s demand for spices was categorically commercial. But this demand was pretty exactly much a subject of savour, the spices’ importance obtaining from subjective cultural judgements regarding their cookery, curative and aphrodisiac virtues. More in general, throughout the early modern Old World, regionally particular cultures and economic models fashioned finely diverse models of exotic utilizations and department. Ubiquitously, these models stressed the esteem and power of exotic produce from far-off lands. The shifting substance of religious and curative values, and assorted cannons of savour in diverse areas, facilitated to form the markets in which profit-seekers manoeuvred.¹

The Dutch East India Company was started in 1602 by a bond contracted by the States-General, the public governmental organization of the Dutch Republic. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, the Euro-Asian trade in pepper was running into serious troubles, previously being carried out by the Portuguese. In addition, in 1585, Antwerp lost its position as the staple market for Asian cargo in northwestern Europe. It was an upshot of the cordon of the Scheldt. Consequently, this bestowed the traders from the northern Netherlands a sturdy spur to face up to the Portuguese monopoly of the Cape route. They were now eager to join directly in the Euro-Asian spice trade. The significant money supply and support of this group had just been improved by the advent in Amsterdam of a number of affluent traders, whose commerce had collapsed in Antwerp. Significant contributions were made by the practical/navigational capability of the Flemish clergyman, Petrus Plancius, and the valuable information on maritime matters given by the Dutchman Linschoten. In April 1595, the Amsterdam-based ‘Company of Far Lands’ sent out four vessels to the East Indies under the authority of Cornelis de Houtman. It was the first among the supposed ‘precompanies’ and it had managed to move up money of *f.* 290,000. One of the vessels was vanished but the enduring three returned in August 1597 with goods of mace, nutmeg and pepper. In the intervening period, in order to have trade with the East Indies, initiatives for new companies were undertaken and were materialized. One of them was established in Amsterdam, while two of them were from Zeeland and another two were Rotterdam based. In 1598, the two Amsterdam companies were combined together and were regarded as the ‘Old Company’. In the spring of the same year, it sent out eight ships to the East. The estimation of the turnover of this journey was around 400 per cent.²

The first and foremost consideration for the involvement of the Dutch in regard to the trade in the East Indies was definitely the acquirement of pepper along with the other spices for the market in Europe. From the very outset, they grasped that, to prolong the spice to be greatly lucrative, they ought to do the utmost to expand their control over both the entire quantity entering Europe along

with the price in which it needed to be bought in the Indies. The merging of the precompanies into the United Company in 1602 was no more than few preliminary steps in that direction. The definitive motif in this endeavor was to remove the Asian traders, the English as well as the Portuguese, who were the forefront enemies in this trade. During the period of 1605 to 1609, the Company made a contract with the producers of Amboyna and Ternate, forcefully obliging them to sell their cloves solely to the Dutch. Nutmeg and mace were similarly procured from the Banda islands through an identical contract in 1605. It was renewed after VOC subjugated these islands in 1621.³ In 1613, the VOC reached Timor and it subsequently in 1653 occupied Kupang. But they faced severe opposition from the 'black Portuguese' or 'Topasses'. They were a Portuguese-speaking Christian mestizo group based on Flores and controlled the sandalwood trade.⁴

In order to have power over the supply of cloves, the company afterwards embarked on prolonged fights against the Muslims of northern Amboina (1634-7), and against their confreres on Huamoal, who received help from the Sultanate of Ternate and from the budding Muslim port of Makassar (1652-7). In the end, a successful VOC caused the trees on all the clove plantations of northern Maluku and Huamoal to be pulled up. On the other hand *hongis* operated by the Protestant Christians of Southern Amboina watched the archipelago to lookout against illicit planting. As the Dutch could not completely cut back "foreign" shipping in the islands, they, in due course, resorted to snatching the foremost entrepots where cargo from the Spice Islands still got through: Melaka (1641), Makassar (1667), and Bantam (1682).⁵

Portuguese got a strong hold on Malabar from the beginning. The case of Dutch East India Company was different. The early trips of the Dutch to Malabar were less than flourishing. Though numerous contracts were signed, in particular with the Samudri *raja*, none of these could be trailed up by the sending off of the ships, or military support. Incontestably, after an ensuing expedition by Pieter van den Broecke to Calicut in October 1616, virtually a decade passed before the Dutch Company organized its next mission to the south-west Indian coast. This was yet again an unreliable maneuver, for, though an agreement was signed between Hermaan van Speult, the VOC diplomat, and the Samudri *raja* on 3 January 1626, the Dutch had little expectation of either claiming this contract, or, putting it into effect. The agreement had set that all pepper grown in the area would be supplied to the Dutch at a preset price, as would all ginger, with VOC trade also being freed of all import and export duties. But the agreement had no result as not a single trading ship of the Company was positioned at Calicut between the date this deal was signed and 1633. The disappointment to trade in this phase is plainly explainable in terms of the abiding weak point of the Dutch monetary and logistic situation. With advances in the early 1630s the convoys sent from Batavia to Surat in 1633 and 1634 were invited to put in at the Malabar ports and trade there, without still setting up factories. Buoyant by the restricted achievement of this nature of trade, a modification was introduced in the phase after 1636, when Anthonio van Diemen became Governor-General of the council of the VOC. Under his management, the yearly cordon of Goa was established, and it became routine between 1636 and 1643 for the cordon convoy to put in at Malabar as well as to pursue trade there. At the same time, the Dutch – like the English – sent out feelers in 1637 to the pepper marts of the Konkan area, and endeavored as well to achieve a perceptible with Virji Vorah for the deliverance of pepper to their factory at Surat. It was no more than in the early 1640s that the Malabar trade set in motion to pay them surpluses in actuality. At the start, the Dutch had sent a product jumble of Indonesian spices, lead, tin, etc. to the Malabar markets. Nevertheless, as their familiarity of trade enhanced, they began to look at a miscellany of pepper procurement regions counting Cannanore, Calicut, Purakad, Kayamkulam and Kollam. From the foundation of van der Lijn's governorship in 1644, it became the practice to send in November of every year a convoy of two to four vessels, which would go from Batavia via Ponto de Gale in Ceylon to Malabar, and of which at least one would advance directly from Batavia to Surat, returning from there with cargo for the Malabar market. These vessels generally came again to Batavia in June or July. During the 1640s, the many-sided nature of the trade developed more prominently. The VOC set in motion to get cargo at Malabar for sale at Surat, and at least some of the pepper was used to be given not to the European market but to China and Taiwan. The factory at Kayamkulam had by 1648 become a centre, with a Dutch factor remaining there to notice to the pepper procurement and the sale of imported cargo even after the vessels had departed for Batavia. Another important product of trade for the Dutch in this region was opium. Emblematic of the budding intricacy of the Dutch trade on Malabar was their mishmash of Malwa opium, bought at Surat, with Patna opium, for which an order of 10,000 Dutch pounds was sent to the Coromandel factories in 1647. By 1649, the quantity of Bengal opium sold by them at Kayamkulam had augmented to 20,000 pounds, while the orders for the same factory incorporated 200,000 pounds areca, coir, 18,000 pounds cardamom, and different other cargo, which were cherished at f. 47,888 in all, and were intended for sale at Surat.⁶

Coromandel became another major area of trading activities for the Dutch. Masulipatnam became the key market for spices. Much of it was consumed in and near the capital of the Golconda kingdom. After the founding of a Dutch factory in the capital and subsequent exclusion from transit toll, the Dutch were capable to increase trade. There were some limited sales of spices in Paleacat, though the slightly high inland customs were a barrier. Devanampatnam was the second chief port for the sale of spices. From there, spices were taken into the Jinji province, and further into the interior of Mysore and Bangalore. Small amount of trading was documented at Nagapatnam, Porto Novo, Sadraspatnam and Bimilipatnam, the northernmost Dutch factory. The entire amounts of spices sold in the coast were small. Average yearly sales in the 1680s of individual spices amounted to: nutmeg 9500 pounds, cloves 16,150 pounds; mace 3300 pounds, although there were fluctuations. The cost price for the Dutch at the supply of production was very small. Therefore, the pace of turnover was massive on these little amounts.⁷

Now, to shift our focus from the politico-economic circumstances of Southwest and Southeast Asia, within which the VOC gradually settled themselves, we will look into the ways some of the medicinal products were procured and traded by the VOC in this period. As can be seen, the Heeren XVII took reserve of what they had on hand in The Netherlands, noted up to date and estimated prices, and placed orders for new cargo with their traders in Asia. Though to contemporary observations the spices create a center of interest, the order placed in 1617 is enlightening for the quantity of exports used in medicine as well.⁸

1617 VOC order for medicinal cargo

Product	Amount
Pepper	70,000-100,000 "bales" (sacks)
Cloves	"as much as possible"
Nutmeg	1,000 "barrels" (<i>bhaar</i>)
Mace	300 barrels
Long pepper	5,000 pounds
Galingale	6,000 pounds
Ginger and cinnamon	"as much as there was space available"
Lingum aloes (a scented resin)	6,000 pounds of the best kind
India rubber (gommelack)	30,000 pounds
Camphor from Borneo	6,000 pounds
China root	30,000 pounds, "fresh and scentless"
Benjamin (a gum from <i>styrax benzoin</i>)	20,000 pounds of the best that can be found
Musk	"none"
Dragon's blood (a red resin from an ancient tree found on Sumatra and nearby places, often used as a colour in varnishes and as a medicine)	"none until further order"
Wax	200,000 pounds
Wood of cassia fistula	3,000 pounds
Spikenard	5,000 ounces
Cubebe (another form of long pepper)	"a good amount"
Raw borax	5000 pounds

Other existing orders also request for cardamom and sugar, amber, indigo, and bezoar stones. In 1622, the VOC set aside three hundred thousand guilders for trade in “cloth from the Coromandel coast, all sorts of rarities, drugs, and porcelain”. And there were constantly considerable quantity of other things such as healing and cookery herbs and roots, particularly medicines, and different exotics.⁹ The data available for the volume of trade for the years, 1630-1642, are as follows:¹⁰

Volume of Trade, 1630-1642

Year	Capital exported to Coromandel	Value of return cargo from Coromandel
1630	386,016 florins	688,471 florins
1632	ca 650,000 florins	ca 377,370 florins
1633	366,001 florins	350,274 florins
1634	314,048 florins	151,660 (?) florins
1635	982,398 florins	531,874 florins
1636	551,695 florins	575,101 florins
1637	446,363 florins	–
1638	466,283 florins	530,709 florins
1639	442,298 florins	–
1640	468,000 florins	–
1641	1,210,118 florins	923,183 florins
1642	1,194,471 florins	959,165 florins

It was also the time, when the English East India Company had already entered the Indian Ocean. In 1619, the Dutch agreement with the English East India Company gave sanction to the later to obtain one-third of the entire quantity of spices offered in the archipelago. But, the English were crippled by the add-on commitment to abide and provide one-third of the expenditure of Dutch garrisons in the area. By the early 1620s, valuable monopsony rights in nutmeg and mace had been gained by the Dutch by establishing a cruel management over the Spice Islands, which implicated the mandatory ruin of surplus clove trees, the enslavement of the island's inhabitants, and the putting to death of those who stood firm. The brutality allowed the VOC to direct the course of spices to Europe to a great degree.¹¹ By 1622, English East India Company was preparing to leave the spice trade.¹² The case of cloves was rather more intricate. Major smuggling trade between the producing areas and Macassar allowed the English and others to acquire bulky amounts of this spice. From 1643 onward, such smuggling was controlled by the VOC.¹³ The Dutch could effectively control the clove trade after the subjugation of Makassar in 1669. The case of pepper was different. In the Indies, it was a considerably more significant object for deal compared to all other spices. Although, the Dutch could obtain strict monopsony rights for certain products, it could never gain the same in case of pepper.¹⁴

Getting monopoly over pepper, which could be sold in Coromandel, was difficult as it could be obtained by the English and later the French. Pepper was also transported overland to South Coromandel via land route and the Dutch could not put a stop to it. The Dutch forbade the Indian traders from transporting Malabar pepper. They rigorously protected the Straits of Ramesvaram between India and Ceylon. Thevar of Ramnad had repeated fight with the Dutch, over the right to open passageway. Previously, the prince had control over the lands surrounding the Straits. In spite of this defense, a good deal of pepper could be traded by the Dutch rivals, both Indian and European. To avoid the competition of trade in Coromandel factories, the Dutch decided to sale the pepper to Indian merchants in Ceylon itself.¹⁵ All these measures led to only partial control over the pepper trade.

By the end of the 1650s, a safe position of monopoly over the supply of cinnamon from Ceylon, and nutmeg, cloves and mace from the Moluccas were obtained by the Dutch. As an outcome they were in a position to boost the prices of these commodities in Europe and in Asia. They set the prices in Asian markets with regard to the highest the market could stand and in relation to the prices fixed in Europe. They had to hold Asian price at a point where it was loss-making for European rivals to send them to Europe.¹⁶

Shortly before the Dutch occupation of Ceylon, the price of cinnamon in Indian markets was 15 stuivers a Dutch pound for the finest variety. In 1659, immediately after its conquest, the Indian price was fixed at 36 stuivers, and in 1660, at 50 stuivers a pound. In 1665, they increased the price even more to 54 stuivers for nutmeg and 90 stuivers for cloves. Towards the end of the century, they increased the price even further. The entire Dutch control over the supply was echoed through the sharp rise in price. Demand was undoubtedly affected by the increase. Demand was fixed at a moment of mounting trade and even commenced to decline in the course of the years.¹⁷

But too high prices did influence trade as was the case in 1697, when the price of cinnamon and cloves were so extreme that it necessitated to be reduced. Sporadically the English transported spices from their Sumatran factories to Madras. This negatively affected the trade of Dutch spices. But this English trade was irregular and normally the Dutch could state prices and sell a steady amount of these spices. The Dutch private traders did not sell Cinnamon in Ceylon but only in the Coromandel factories. On occasion Malabar and Indonesian cinnamon were transported by the English. However, they were of such inferior quality as compared to the Ceylon cinnamon of the Dutch that it could not affect the Dutch trade. A price assessment of the 1730s fixed the following rates for the major spices: Mace – 160 stuivers a pound; Nutmeg – 72 stuivers a pound; Cloves – 100 stuivers a pound; Cinnamon – 60 stuivers a pound.¹⁸ In the same year, the quantity of the import trade from the sale of goods in Coromandel was: Pepper - 661,085 pounds; Nutmeg - 32, 768 pounds; Cloves - 35,752 pounds; Mace - 4,117 pounds.¹⁹

Another medicinal products extensively traded by the VOC was camphor. Dutch contribution in the camphor trade is first indicated in an account from the end of the sixteenth century, to the result that at Java's principal place, Sunda Calapa there was great amass of camphor along with other things, Calapa, like Bantam and Palembang in Sumatra, was an entrepot that dealt in both local and foreign products. In the seventeenth century, the Dutch became the main traders in camphor, between South East Asia and Europe. Early in the century, they had a factory in Borneo, where camphor was collected. From the base in Bantam, they purchased camphor in Sunda and Chincheo, but better in Borneo. The Dutch East India Company then sold about 50,000 Ibs of "Indonesian" camphor yearly. In the late seventeenth century, and without a doubt before, the company sent Sumatran camphor to Japan and Japanese camphor to India and Europe.²⁰

Areca nuts also formed important part of VOC trade. In 1670, Dutch had a monopoly in Ceylon areca nuts. The Indian and European private traders passed severe competition of Malabar nuts. In a 1684 treaty with the Thevar, the Dutch distinctively laid down the ban of ships with areca nuts through the Straits of Ramesvaram. The Dutch made all efforts to sell areca nuts of which much was anticipated in the seventeenth century. They had the notion that all the Coromandel factories presented huge prospects for the sale of this item of common use.²¹

During the same time, much like the Portuguese, the Dutch also participated in the trade in precious stones. Bezoar stones got in Asia were held and sent like precious stones. Victor Sprinkel, the Dutch factor of the VOC in Patani, described on 25 September 1608, the procurement of six bezoar stones for a price of 38 guilders, 7 stuiver and 6 penning. From the goods listing of the unfortunate *Witte Leeuw*, it is recognized that a holder including 14 bezoar stones was to be taken on board collectively with a purse including 480.5 carats of various diamonds. The bezoars and diamonds were consumed in a store fire in 1612 just before they could be taken abroad. The amassed loss was considered at 66,438 guilders which, by the way, was almost as much as the whole spice goods amounting to 87,705 guilders. The latter, too, was vanished when the vessel went down on its home-bound journey to Europe in 1613.²²

There were principally three policies VOC deployed in order to import the merchandise coming from Asia, namely, contract sales, sales at a preset price, and sales by public auction. The first policy was the foremost apparatus used during the first half of the seventeenth century. It was mostly in relation to pepper, by far the most important single commodity figuring in the listing of cargo exported by the Company. The policy was founded on dialogue with foremost Dutch syndicates for the clearance of the whole bunch of a specific product. It generally concerned an official statement signed by the Company, where it agreed not to trade the particular product anywhere else for a stipulated time. This would give the syndicate an unconditional monopoly over the thing. One such example, referring to a deal of the Company with a syndicate can be revealed through the contract dated 19 October 1623. It involved the entire deposit of pepper with the impending loads, about to reach Amsterdam before 1 May 1624. The contract was for two years, and this period, according to the official document, was mentioned as '*stilstand*'. The apparatus of the second policy, i.e., sales at a preset price, was pursued with regard to mace, nutmeg and cloves. The Company succeeded to gain an unconditional

monopoly in these things during the second half of the seventeenth century. The credentials to decide the best price were definitely not an uncomplicated assignment. In this regard, the Company had to keep in mind the possible consequences of the decided price on stimulating smuggling. Between 1677 and 1744, for example, the rate at which cloves were sold in Amsterdam was decided at 75 stuivers per Dutch pound. Lastly, the third policy of selling by public auction was the foremost method that the VOC employed during the eighteenth century.²³

An important aspect of the VOC trade during the eighteenth century was its commercial exchanges with China. The VOC opened its direct trade with China in 1729 and it continued until 1794, when the directorate of the Company was disbanded. The VOC traded with China for star anise, rhubarb, galingale, China root and so on and so forth.²⁴ In 1756, the Amsterdam Committee, responsible for conducting trade with China preset the funds for the vessels at 1,200,000 guilders of silver in addition to a definite quantity of lead, also to be utilized as weight. Also this, 400,000 pounds of tin, 5,000 pounds of nutmeg, 5,000 pounds of cloves, and 100,000 pounds of sapanwood were necessitated to be added-on by the VOC. This Committee planned that the ships from China should contain aloe, China root, camphor, galingale, gamboges, rhubarb, sago, star anise, spelter and turmeric not to mention many other merchandise.²⁵

The ship named *Slooten* started its journey in December and returned to the Dutch Republic in January 1758 with a consignment of 10,163 pounds of China root, 5,079 pounds of galingale, 3,137 pounds of rhubarb, 10,072 pounds of turmeric, 1,451 pounds of sago, 2,553 pounds of gamboges. All the ensuing explorations of China vessels were based on this first expedition.²⁶

During early 1760s, only Chinese junks were used to carry the merchandise from Canton to Batavia. For instance, in the first month of 1764, two such vessels, that is, the *Sam-con(g)-hing* and the *Sweehing*, departed from Canton to Batavia with rhubarb, musk, China root, and galingale, and other articles.²⁷ After 1768, VOC began to employ both the Chinese vessels of the Company and of Chinese junks or Portuguese ships to export the necessary items.²⁸

Private trade played a considerable role in the total transportation of goods under the VOC. The best known of the VOC's trade in Asia is the monopoly trade, with the upshot that Dutch monopolies in the spice and tin trades, for example, are often measured as the foremost economic commotion of the VOC. There is no way to compute the private trade carried out by Asians and Europeans, that was illegitimate from the VOC's point of view, but minutes reserved by the VOC of official private trade proves that Asian trading was not smothered. In the 1770s, for instance, there were 8,000 Javanese, Chinese, Malay and Buginese shippers with 72,000 crew operational in north Java ports only, and their vessels carried 60 per cent of all good traded. Asian shippers obtained cargo from small ports and carried them to pinning ports to trade with VOC traders. Cargoes of coconuts, tamarind, fruits and rice were procured by VOC traders to give it to the Asian population that inhabited in VOC-controlled ports. VOC vessels took opium from India to Batavia where they were traded to Asian shippers for resale in their home ports.²⁹

European vessels were much bigger than Asian vessels; they carried more cargo and floated longer spaces. In the late eighteenth century, for example, the typical Dutch vessel voyaging between Europe and Asia was forty-five meters long and had three masts and numerous decks. Vessels put together in VOC dockyards in Java for transferring cargo to Asian markets were smaller, two-masted, with one to two decks, and twenty-five to thirty meters long. They carried a crew of 100 primarily Javanese, Malay, Butonese and Buginese sailors, and were carrying weapons with twenty-eight cannon, eight swivel guns and many rifles. They transported vast cargoes of rice, logs, textiles and precious metals in bars and coins. By comparison, vessels commanded by Chinese, Javanese, Malays and Buginese from the same period averaged between six and nine meters, had crews of five to eight men, and carried between ports along Java's coast cargoes of salt, tamarind, coconuts, dried fish, rattan, straw storage bags and opium. They carried weapons with two cannon, some muskets and gunpowder. The crew had spears and daggers as well.³⁰

Tracking down the accurate information of medicinal exchanges in terms of the price and amount is difficult to achieve without detailed study of each product in consideration. Here, the first-hand observation of explorers helps to fill the gap to a great extent. The account of Frederik Anderson Bolling, who signed up with the Dutch Company's army in 1669, is significant in this context. Bolling, for instance, named every VOC factory in Asia and registered the goods which were acquired and traded at each centre, subsequently, providing a comprehensive account of the trade in medicinal cargo under the VOC. As he stated, to Amboina the VOC sent *reals of eight* and cloth from China, Bengal, and Coromandel; in return they fetched cloves, nutmeg, palm oil, and lemon preserves to Batavia. To Banda the Dutch sent cloth from Surat and Coromandel in return for nutmeg, mace, preserved nutmegs, preserved lemons. From Solor and Timor the VOC in Batavia got sandalwood, pigstone, honey, wax, tortoise shells, and mother-

of-pearl, in return for all types of cloth and a selection of trinkets such as nails, mirrors, and knives. From the Moluccas drew cloves and palm oil, again in exchange of reals of eight and cloth from Surat and Coromandel. In Ternate the Dutch exchanged rice and cloth for tobacco and licorice.³¹

Bolling's account also shows that the VOC sent eight ships from Batavia to Japan each year, one of which was usually vanished in a tropical storm. Notwithstanding such fatalities, the Japan trade was the VOC's most lucrative trade. Among the goods traded in Japan were different varieties of cloth – Bolling referred prices for each – as well as Turkish grosgrain, ivory, Morocco leather, sandalwood, ebony, fur clothing, pepper, cloves, linen from Guinea, silk goods, especially taffeta, fine linen of numerous categories, sugar, amber, "Raff", blue cotton, and large dogs. From Japan the VOC vessels received to Batavia silver, gold, lacquer ware, copper, camphor, rhubarb, bamboo, pearls, sake, wheat, rice, chestnuts and other nuts. The Siamese acquired the same types of commodities as the Japanese. The Dutch acquired incense, gumlac, and ivory in Siam. In Sumatra the VOC exchanged Coromandel cloth and trinkets for incense, pepper, and benzoin. VOC vessels also fetched different varieties of cloves and other spices to Malacca from where they carried resin and gum.³²

Bolling added that, the VOC trade with Ceylon, India, and Persia was headquartered in Batavia. He also expressed what the VOC obtained and traded in, what they called "the West Quarter". To Sinda (on Ormuz) they sent pepper, cinnamon, benzoin, amber, saffron, cardamom, Malaccan gum, indigo, sugar, China root, mace, nutmeg, and Chili pepper. From Sinda to Batavia they carried Persian cloths, cotton, silk, silk floss, saltpeter, and foodstuffs such as butter, rice and wheat flour. Along the Coromandel Coast the VOC procured cotton cloth, rubies, diamonds, agates, pearls, indigo, opium, and "Callo Krud", they traded nutmeg, mace, cloves, sandalwood, preserved nutmeg, musk, gumlac, China root. To Ceylon the VOC got silver, gold, and cloth from China, Coromandel, and Surat. They sent cinnamon, ginger, pepper, rhubarb, and precious stones from Ceylon to Batavia. On the Malabar Coast the VOC obtained principally pepper and cardamom in exchange for Coromandel cloth and reals of eight. In Bengal they obtained ginger, sugar, opium, in exchange of reals of eight, Chinese porcelain, and Moluccan spices. The Dutch traded cloves, nutmeg, pepper, camphor, ivory, benzoin, amber, saffron, sugar, China root, sandalwood in Surat, where they procured principally fine linens, saltpeter, indigo, carpets, musk, and white caraway. In Persia the VOC traded in amber, spices, sugar candy, preserved ginger, gumlac, cardamom, cinnamon, China root. From Persia they obtained pearls, red silk, gold brocade, carpets, sulphur, saffron, sandalwood, alum, almonds and other nuts, raisins, kismis, and Moorish ducats. To end this list, the Dutch attained ambergris and amber from Mocha on the Red Sea. Here they traded most of the same goods that they got to Surat. Bolling's long listing of goods sent in and out of Batavia is restricted to those which were conveyed on VOC vessels between VOC factories. In addition, sizeable amounts of commodities were carried on Chinese and Javanese vessels. Cargo from many islands in the archipelago where the Dutch had no establishments – principally rice and other goods – were taken to Batavia in local ferries.³³

Nevertheless, it must be emphasized at the end of the paper that, due to the enormous varieties of medicinal drugs, herbs and spices that were circulated during the *Estado da India* and the VOC it is in fact impossible to measure and encompass their networks of circulation. An example would perhaps validate the assumption – a ceramics container was to be found on the *orlopdeck* of the Amsterdam, which enclosed a vegetal accumulation, acknowledged as tamarind. The occurrence of germs of the kind pointed toward that the fruit was not refined, as these pests only live in the tropical place of origin. Tamarind was one of the goods which the VOC imported from Asia. After its onset in Amsterdam and after being reserved in the stockroom on the yard, the plants altered from goods into an element of departing ship for the reason of its medical properties and became visible under the Latin apothecary phrase *fructus Tamarindorum* on the vessel's medicine register as a laxative or fever medicine. The archeological authenticity presented that behind this eighteenth century medical expressions an unprocessed stuff was unseen, fruit with pests, with which the vessels' doctors had to prepare their own medicine. As the VOC imported this unprocessed stuff themselves, tamarind does not become visible on the individual acquisition register of medical herbs. In the 1740s these were supplied by three or four shops in the city, like pharmacist Roeland Willem van Homrigh in Leidsestraat, drugstore Joost van Amstel on the Nieuwendijk or Cornelis Jansz Stegerhoek.³⁴ The multipayered circulation of unrefined tamarind paste would certainly not be the single exception. Thousands of such exceptions perhaps lie unnoticed in the colonial archives of the two Companies. It needs a lifelong endeavor of a researcher to uncover such stories which can supplement, modify and transform the history of mercantile network of medicinal commodities.

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