

Making Hidden Treasures Visible

Describing and Photographing Prints and Maps in the Rare Books Collection at the Maritime Museum in Rotterdam¹

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Abstract/Zusammenfassung: Verborgene Schätze sichtbar machen: Die beschreibende und fotografische Aufnahme von Drucken und Karten in der Sammlung seltener Bücher im Schiffahrtsmuseum Rotterdam

Dating from 1874, the Maritime Museum in Rotterdam is the oldest maritime museum in the Netherlands. The library collections contain approximately 45,000 books and some 25,000 volumes of periodicals. A special collection is the Rare Books Department. Altogether there are some 2,400 volumes published before 1850, including topics such as travel, shipbuilding, and navigation. These rare books are very special and sometimes unique, not only for their texts but also for their illustrations: the prints and maps. These

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illustrations form a secret treasure. The museum wants to give these images more attention. Therefore, we need to know what they are, how many there are, and what is pictured on them. A project of describing and photographing the prints and maps was started. The article discusses the objectives of the project. The primary motive to execute the project is the unacquaintance of this material. The museum wants to know more about these illustrations, e.g. where are the prints and maps located in the books? Are the prints and maps in the books complete? If a print or map is missing has this always been the case or has it ever been removed by a malicious person? A second goal is that the museum also wants to use the prints and maps more in its exhibitions. The third reason is these still hidden treasures have only rarely been seen. Therefore lovers of collection items can be done a great favor and pleasure to show them. And of course, also awareness can be raised for research purposes and loans for exhibitions outside the museum walls.

The project was started in 2010 by describing prints and maps thematically for specific purposes, usually an exhibition. The first registration employees were students from universities, that worked as trainees and interns. However, since 2017 there has been a more integrated approach where every book is run through shelf by shelf. The prints and maps are described as if they were single items. In the registration system, a connection is made between the description of the item and the book in which it is included. Nowadays the Maritime Museum works with volunteers as registration employees and photographers.

The first experience is that many prints are found that, at first glance, are not specifically maritime, such as cityscapes. However, these can also be important as well and leads the curators to an even broader view of the collection. There are also several different prints of the same event. In some cases, an event could not be interpreted. This became clear when they were compared with other pictures of the same event. Until now almost 31,000 prints and maps have been described and photographed.

Das Schifffahrtsmuseum in Rotterdam, gegründet im Jahr 1874, ist das älteste Schifffahrtsmuseum der Niederlande. Die Bibliotheksbestände umfassen etwa 45.000 Bücher und etwa 25.000 Zeitschriftenbände. Ein besonderer Teil der Sammlung ist die Abteilung für seltene Bücher, die rund 2.400 Bände umfasst, die vor 1850 erschienen sind, darunter Reiseberichte und Arbeiten zu Schiffbau und Navigation. Diese seltenen Bücher sind etwas ganz Besonderes und manchmal einzigartig, nicht nur wegen ihrer Texte, sondern auch wegen ihrer Illustrationen: den Drucken und Karten. Diese Illustrationen bilden einen geheimen Schatz. Das Museum möchte diesen Bildern mehr Aufmerksamkeit schenken, aber dafür müssen wir wissen, um welche es sich handelt, wie viele es gibt und was darauf abgebildet ist. Es wurde ein Projekt zur Beschreibung und Fotografie der Drucke und Karten gestartet. Der Artikel geht auf die Ziele des Projekts ein. Das Hauptmotiv für die Durchführung des Projekts ist die Unkenntnis dieses Materials. Das Museum möchte mehr über diese Illustrationen erfahren, z.B.: Wo befinden sich die Drucke und Karten in den Büchern? Sind die Drucke und Karten in den Büchern vollständig? Wenn ein Abdruck oder eine Karte fehlt, war das schon immer so oder wurde das Material absichtlich entfernt? Ein zweites Ziel ist die angestrebte stärkere Verwendung der Drucke und Karten in den museumseigenen Ausstellungen. Der dritte Beweggrund für das Projekt fußt auf dem Umstand, dass diese verborgenen Schätze bisher nur selten zu

sehen waren. Liebhabern von Sammlungsstücken kann mit ihrer Bereitstellung ein großer Gefallen getan werden, und natürlich können die Darstellungen auch zu Recherchezwecken und als Leihgaben für Ausstellungen außerhalb der eigenen Museumsmauern bereitgestellt werden.

Das Projekt begann im Jahr 2010 mit der thematischen Beschreibung von Drucken und Karten für bestimmte Zwecke, meist eine Ausstellung. Die ersten Registrierungsmitarbeiter waren Studenten von Universitäten, die als Auszubildende und Praktikanten arbeiteten. Seit 2017 gibt es jedoch einen stärker integrierten Ansatz, bei dem jedes Buch Regal für Regal durchlaufen wird. Die Drucke und Karten werden so beschrieben als wären sie Einzelstücke. Im Registrierungssystem wird eine Verbindung zwischen der Beschreibung der einzelnen Aufnahme und dem Werk hergestellt, in dem sie enthalten ist. Heutzutage arbeitet das Schifffahrtsmuseum mit Freiwilligen als Registrierungsmitarbeitern und Fotografen.

Die erste Erfahrung zeigt, dass es viele Drucke gibt, die auf den ersten Blick nicht spezifisch maritim sind, wie zum Beispiel Stadtansichten. Diese können jedoch auch wichtig sein und gewähren den Kuratoren einen noch umfassenderen Blick auf die Sammlung. Auch lassen sich mehrere unterschiedliche gedruckte Wiedergaben eines Ereignisses finden. In manchen anderen Fällen konnte ein Ereignis hingegen nicht interpretiert werden. Dies wurde beim Vergleich mit anderen bildlichen Darstellungen desselben Ereignisses deutlich. Bisher wurden fast 31.000 Drucke und Karten beschrieben und fotografiert.

Introduction

The Maritime Museum in Rotterdam is the oldest maritime museum in the Netherlands. Its roots go back to the mid-nineteenth century, when Prince Hendrik (1820–1879), a brother of the later King Willem III, was the initiator of the Koninklijke Nederlandsche Yacht-Club (Dutch Royal Yachting Club) in Rotterdam. In the Yachting Club building², there was a »Modellenkamer« (model room) with ship models on display for the club members. In the Yachting Club yearbook of 1857, there is for the first time mention of a library collection. The first library books were donated by Prince Hendrik and some of his fellow club members.

2 The Yachting Club building still exists. Today, the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam (ethnological museum) is located there. The facade of the building with ornaments of ship's bows, mermaids, and Neptune figures is still reminiscent of the times of the Yachting Club.



Fig. 1: Christoffel Bisschop, Portrait of H.R.H. Prince (Willem Frederik) Hendrik of the Netherlands, 1879. Oil on canvas, h. 170.5 x w. 127.0 cm. (Collection Maritime Museum, Rotterdam, inv. no. P596; loan from Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam)

In 1874, the Yachting Club's collection became accessible to the public, marking the inception of the Maritime Museum in its present form. In the one-and-a-half centuries since then, the collection has grown enormously. The collection nowadays contains about one million objects, including ship models, paintings, navigation instruments, technical plans, maps, atlases, globes, corporate printing from shipping companies and shipyards, posters, actual ships, cranes, engines, and machines, among others. The Maritime Museum is a comprehensive maritime museum with a focus on the Dutch shipping industry from the past, present, and future in a broad context. And because the museum is located in Rotterdam, the maritime capital of Europe, the port area of Rotterdam is, of course, one of the focal points in the collection policy. The museum focuses specifically on modern inland shipping and offshore activities.

The Maritime Museum also possesses an extensive library collection. The library has two main tasks. Firstly, it serves as the knowledge center for the museum staff, provid-

ing information on the past, present, and future of all aspects of shipping and maritime topics. Secondly, visitors and researchers with all kinds of questions on maritime affairs are welcome to find information for their inquiries. The library collection now contains approximately 45,000 volumes of books and 25,000 volumes of periodicals. It is one of the largest and most comprehensive collections in this field in the Netherlands.

Rare Books Department

The Rare Books Department is a special part of the library collection. Altogether, there are approximately 2,400 books published before 1850. The rare books, published in the nineteenth century, are quite numerous. Therefore these items are separated from the modern books based on the year of publication, i.e. 1850.

The rare books in the Engelbrecht Collection are included in this collection and consist of approximately 600 volumes.³ The topics covered in this collection include travels, geography, shipbuilding, and navigation. This collection was acquired in 1966 from the heirs of Willem Anton Engelbrecht (1874–1965). Engelbrecht, during his active life, served as a director of a shipbroking firm and invested his money in the acquisition of antiquarian books, maps, and atlases. During his lifetime, Engelbrecht was a regular donor to the Maritime Museum. The collection of Engelbrecht is of a very high quality. Engelbrecht can be considered a »gourmet« among collectors. He collected only the most beautiful books. In his choice of a collecting area, he aimed for a specific theme: the Dutch Republic's role in global exploration during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Engelbrecht was particularly interested in four aspects. What was the state of knowledge in the fields of cosmography, geography, cartography, and nautical science prior to the Dutch voyages of discovery? How did the results of those voyages stimulate these sciences? What were the consequences for Dutch trade and shipping? And finally, how did the Dutch activities resonate with developments abroad?

The Engelbrecht collection contains rare books that provide descriptions of the world and various countries, as well as works on the development of astronomy, cosmography, and nautical science during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There are also rare books on shipping, maritime law, fishing, Dutch history, and topography.

Next to the Engelbrecht Collection, there are approximately 1,900 volumes of rare books that have been acquired by the museum since the mid-nineteenth century. These volumes often contain technical subjects, such as navigation and shipbuilding. Both collections complement and sometimes overlap each other very well, which is beneficial when a particular book needs to be used for multiple purposes. For example, it can be displayed as an object in an exhibition at the Maritime Museum, while also being loaned to another museum or institution.

These rare books are very special and sometimes unique, making them valuable not only for their texts but also for their illustrations: the prints and maps. These illustra-

3 Fontaine Verwey, Herman de la (introd.) (1966): *Lof der zeevaart. Collectie Dr. W.A. Engelbrecht*. Rotterdam; Bos-Rietdijk, Elly (1992): *De collectie Engelbrecht in het Maritiem Museum "Prins Hendrik"*. In: *De Boekenwereld* 9 (2), 1992, pp. 86–96.

tions form a secret and hidden treasure and the Maritime Museum wants to give these images more attention. A project was initiated to gain a deeper understanding of prints and maps. The intention was to find out more about them: what are they, how many are there and what is pictured on them?

The Maritime Museum's Goal to Execute this Project

The primary motive is to raise knowledge about this special and sometimes unique material. There is not much known about the illustrations in these rare books. How many are there? What are they? What do they show? Are they completely available in the volumes?

This is important information for museum curators who organize exhibitions and search for striking and appropriate objects, but also for other research purposes, such as when external researchers and other interested visitors in the library want to study them. The Maritime Museum wanted to know how many illustrations these books each have inside so that it can be checked when the books are returned after consultation by researchers. Alas, not every researcher has good intentions in studying rare books.

The aim of the project is therefore to make an inventory of the prints and maps. What exactly is contained in the books and, equally important, where are the illustrations located? E.g. on which page(s) can they be found or between which pages?

Books and Their Contents

Books published before 1850 are not always bound in the same way. Copies of the same book may differ from one another. The prints and maps were often added later. Sometimes there is a list at the end of a rare book with directions for the binder, indicating where the prints and maps should be inserted. In earlier times, books were bought as a pile of printed sheets of paper and a buyer had to have them bound by a bookbinder. If he was well-off, he had his book bound in leather, and if he was less wealthy, it was bound in parchment or paper. That is why all rare books have a unique appearance, even if they are different copies of the same book.

In some cases, mistakes have been made in the bindings. Prints are sometimes inserted in the wrong place in the book. Or not at all, because that picture may never have been there in the first place, as the book owner did not select it. Or because they were once taken out by a print thief.

The Maritime Museum is unaware of this fact for many of the books, which is why the project can also be described as a baseline measurement.

A second goal is that the museum also wants to use the prints and maps more for research purposes and also in its exhibitions. Exhibitions often contain vulnerable objects that cannot be displayed for a very long time. For conservation reasons, works on paper, such as drawings or prints, can be displayed for a maximum of three months. And when exhibitions last for a long time, e.g. one and a half, sometimes two years, it is comprehensible that the same print or map cannot be on display all the time. But with a greater variety of objects at its disposal, such as prints and maps found in rare books, the Maritime Museum can undergo regular changes during the exhibition period.

The third reason is that these still hidden treasures have only rarely been seen. By registering and photographing these prints and maps they can be found by enthusiastic lovers of collection items. Researchers will become aware of the existence of perhaps unknown images. And of course, they can also raise awareness by other museums who can apply for a loan. And then these books and their contents can be presented in exhibitions outside the walls of the Maritime Museum itself.

The Execution and Approach of the Project

In 2010, the Maritime Museum started describing the illustrations thematically, for specific purposes, usually an exhibition. In 2013, an intern from Erasmus University specifically focused on sixteenth-century maps found in rare books. For the exhibition “Real Pirates,” which was on display in 2013, prints on privateering and piracy were described. For the exhibition “Heroes of Cape Horn” in 2016, which commemorated the discovery of Cape Horn and the first rounding by Dutch explorers 400 years earlier, maps of the Cape Horn area and the Magellan Strait were registered. The registration work was conducted by interns and trainees from Leiden University, the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, and the Reinwardt Academy in Amsterdam (academy for studies in the field of museology).

In 2015, a student from Leiden University described the prints and maps in the various editions of Jan Huygen van Linschoten’s “Itinerario.” In recent years, the “Itinerario” has frequently been displayed in exhibitions, e.g. in “The World on Your Plate,” an exhibition on the relationship between the maritime world and food (2015–2017), in “Masterpieces” (2014–2019) and “Expedition Bright Minds,” an exhibition in which one could discover what it was about that made you a scholar and world traveler (2017–2019).

Since 2017, there has been a more integrated and structural approach with collection volunteers, who register the prints and maps, and photographers who produce the images. Staff members of the museum supervise the project and check the descriptions.

Nowadays there are four collection volunteers and four voluntary photographers working on the project. Sometimes interns from universities join for a specific period of time. Descriptions and images are registered in Axiell Collections⁴, the museum’s internal registration system, and summaries of the records are available in the online public catalog *Maritiem Digitaal*.⁵ This catalog includes participation from approximately 15 maritime museums and institutions. Since 2021, it is also available in the online public catalog of the Maritime Museum itself, *MMR Collection Online*.⁶

So at this moment, every single rare book is considered important, not just the ones that will be presented in exhibitions. Therefore the Maritime Museum started with the first book on the first shelf at the top left of the first bookcase and the work will end finally with the last book on the last shelf at the bottom right of the last bookcase. The title pages

4 The Maritime Museum used to work with ADLIB, but this registration system has been replaced for Axiell Collections.

5 Website: <https://www.maritiemdigitaal.nl> (March 22, 2022).

6 Website: <https://mmr.adlibhosting.com/ais6V50/search/simple> (March 22, 2022).

are also described and photographed. Sometimes there is a print or map on it, but not always.

In Maritiem Digitaal and MMR Collection Online, the rare books are presented more effectively and are more visually appealing compared to descriptions of books from other institutions, thanks to the inclusion of the images on the title pages.

It is remarkable, that since the project has been executed the Maritime Museum receives much more requests from other museums in the Netherlands and abroad for the loans of certain rare books in the collection. This is compelling evidence that rare books also garner more attention because of the detailed descriptions and photographs of the maps and prints in online public catalogs.

Guidelines and Examples

The Maritime Museum follows instructional guidelines based on previous experiences. Prints and maps are described as if they were single sheets.

Recorded are the title, the description, and the inventory number, which corresponds with the inventory number of the book in which the print or map is to be found. Next, a relationship is established between the record of the print or map and that of the book in which it is to be found.

When all the prints and maps in a particular rare book are described, the next phase begins. A print of the descriptions and the book itself is taken to the photographers' team, who work in pairs. While photographing all the prints and maps in the rare book they check whether all prints and maps have been described and that none has accidentally been skipped. Afterward, the photos are uploaded into the database records. At that moment, they are available to the museum staff. After uploading them to Maritiem Digitaal and the collection online system, they are also accessible to the public, colleagues, and researchers.

The integrated approach leads to an even broader view of the collection by the curators. Due to the large number of prints described, we are now able to see connections that couldn't be seen before. Until now almost 31,000 prints and maps have been described and photographed.⁷ To show some of the findings so far, some striking examples will follow.

In the library collection of the Maritime Museum e.g. four Dutch editions of Jan Huygen van Linschoten's "Itinerario" are kept, two of them were published in 1596. Furthermore, there are editions available in English, French, and German. This book is truly a masterpiece, not only for its images but also because of the text. Jan Huygen van Linschoten (ca. 1563–1611) traveled extensively along the East Indies regions under Portuguese influence and he served between 1583 and 1588 as the Portuguese archbishop's secretary in Goa on the southwestern coast of India. The archbishop had a prominent position, for he was the Portuguese viceroy in Asia.

7 The situation as of September 2024.



Fig. 2: Jan Huygen van Linschoten, "Itinerario. Voyage ofte Schipvaert, van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien, ..." (title page), Amsterdam, 1596. (Collection Maritime Museum, Rotterdam, inv. no. BWAE233a)

During this period Van Linschoten experienced a lot of classified information on Asian trade and navigation. In 1596, he published all his knowledge in the book, "Itinerario," which contains maps, prints, and information on peoples, animals, trade products etc. that he collected in Asia. When the knowledge presented by Van Linschoten in his book became known in the Dutch Republic, it served as a significant stimulus for the Dutch to embark on their voyages to Asia and acquire the products from there.

Eventually, this led to the establishment of the VOC, the Dutch East India Company, in 1602.

One of the many hand-colored prints in the “Itinerario” shows the ships of China and Java *met rietten Seylen en houten anckers* (“with reed sails and wooden anchors”). The print shows a ship with seven men on board. The man on the right is holding a rod in his hand, with what appears to be a drum in front of him. To his left is a man with an oar under his arm. In the center, a man leans overboard with a bucket attached to a rope. In the background on the left, a coastline with an adjacent city is depicted. This Chinese ship was the most convenient and efficient type of ship in Asia, operating from the Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean, to Oceania.



Fig. 3: Jan Huygen van Linschoten, “Itinerario. Voyage ofte Schipvaert, van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien, ...” (print of “Ships from China and Java”), Amsterdam, 1596. (Collection Maritime Museum, Rotterdam, inv. no. BWAE233a)

A completely different print can be found in the travel account of the Rotterdam innkeeper Olivier van Noort (ca. 1558–1627), who was the first Dutch navigator to circumnavigate the world. The print shows three inhabitants of Ladrões, known today as the Mariana Islands in Micronesia.

There are two men on either side of a woman in the middle. The people on the island are not dressed, only the women wear a leaf for their genitalia. In the text, the people on this island are described as thief-like. It is further stated that these people can swim well.

Apparently, a previous owner did not think the image was chaste enough because there were three brown spots in three specific places on the print.



Fig. 4: [Olivier van Noort], “Beschryvinghe vande Voyagie om den geheelen Werelt Cloot, ghedaen door Olivier van Noort van Utrecht, ...” (print of “Les Habitans de Lysle de la Droues,” or, *The inhabitants of the Ladrones Isles*), Rotterdam, circa 1601. (Collection Maritime Museum, Rotterdam, inv. no. BWAE249a)

There are many more beautiful images, but these few examples indicate that the old prints are very special, and in some cases extremely rare. They are truly masterpieces!

The integrated and structural approach brings the Maritime Museum more knowledge on the maps and prints. It makes the museum aware of the fact that in the collection of rare books, one also comes across many prints that at first glance are not specifically maritime by nature, such as cityscapes and town views. However, these can also be important. For example, the responsible curator for the contents of the exhibition “Bright Minds Expedition” was searching for a print with an image of Enkhuizen, the city where Jan Huygen van Linschoten lived from an early age. It turned out that the Maritime Museum not only keeps in the collection prints sheets with cityscapes of Enkhuizen but also some prints bound in rare books!

This integrated approach therefore ensures and leads to the curators getting an even broader view of the collection.

The Future of the Project

The Maritime Museum still gains knowledge and experience concerning the work and the time required. This way, we can calculate approximately how long it will take for all maps and prints to be described and photographed. At the moment (2024) we estimate that it will take another five to seven years.

But due to the crisis, that was caused by the Covid pandemic, the project unfortunately was slowed down. Museum employees and volunteers were not able to work in the museum and therefore the work on the registration and photography of the prints and maps was stopped. In some cases, volunteers could describe the images from their home base by using descriptions of the same books found in other collections or on Google Books. Of course, these descriptions have to be checked with the prints in the rare books in the collection of the Maritime Museum itself!

At this moment (September 2024) the pandemic seems to be coming to an end and the rigorous measures for keeping distance and working from home are becoming less strict. This allows museum employees and volunteers to come to the museum more often and countless activities can be carefully resumed, including the registration project of the prints and maps in the rare books.

Finds So Far and Lessons Learned: An Example – Japanese Belly Cutting

In the library collection of the Maritime Museum, there is a copy of the book “Wahrhaftige Beschreibungen dreyer mächtigen Königreiche, Japan, Siam und Corea ...” (in English: “Truthful Descriptions of Three Powerful Kingdoms, Japan, Siam, and Corea ...”). This book was published in 1672.

When starting the work, the registration employee takes the book in his or her hands and begins searching for the prints and maps inside. Each print and map is then described with what is depicted on it. Sometimes, it is useful to have some context with the image to provide an accurate description. In the book “Wahrhaftige Beschreibungen ...”, a print was found depicting several individuals wearing Japanese clothing. They are sitting in a square in front of a palace and a city. Without any knowledge of Japan, this can be considered as an audience, a ritual belonging to a religious movement, an initiation, or punishment. In short, there are endless possibilities.



Fig. 5: Christoph Arnold, “Wahrhaftige Beschreibungen dreyer mächtigen Königreiche, Japan, Siam und Corea. ...” (print of “belly cutting”). Nürnberg, 1672. (Collection Maritime Museum, Rotterdam, inv. no. BWAE170)

The description of the prints is important for someone conducting specific research. He or she can only determine the importance of this print for his or her research when it is located using the correct search terms, keywords, or title words. It is, therefore, important to use the correct terms in the description.

The easiest way to do this is to read the accompanying text in the book and quickly determine which part of the text the print belongs to. In this case, it is a book in German, written in Gothic letters:

... Wann ein grosser Herr stirbt/find gemeinlich zehen/zwanzig odre dreissig Personen/nachdem er gross/und der Unterthanen viel/die ihren Bauch aufschneiden ...

Das gemeldte Bauchschneiden geht auf folgende Manier zu: Sie laden ihre Blutsfreunde zusammen ..., ... schneiden sie ihnen selbst den Bauch kreuzweis auf/das die Därmer/und Unreinigkeit/heraus lauffen ...

Translated into English this reads:

“When a great gentleman dies/find commonly ten/twenty or thirty people/after he is tall/and the subjects a lot/who cut out their bellies ...”

“The reported abdominal cutting is conducted in the following manner: You invite your blood friends together ...”, “... cut your belly crosswise/that the intestines/and impurities/run out ...”.

So, from the passage in the text, we learn that it is about some kind of ritual harakiri. However, what do all the letters on the print indicate?

By coincidence, the same print of the scene was found on the title page of another book, this time written in Dutch. The title is “Rechte Beschryvinge Van het Machtigh Koninghrijck van Iappan ...” (in English: “True Description of the Mighty Kingdom of Japan ...”). This book was published in The Hague in 1662.



Fig. 6: Philips Lucas and François Caron, “Rechte Beschryvinge Van het Machtigh Koninghrijck van Iappan, ...” (title page), The Hague, circa 1662. (Collection Maritime Museum, Rotterdam, inv. no. BWAE171a)

This book contains an explanation of the letters, making this information important for describing the print in the book “Wahrhaftige Beschreibungen ...”:

... Daer mede de maniere van 't Buyck-snyden wert aengewesen.

A. Is den Persoon die sijnen buyck op snyt.

B. Is sijn noothulper by aldien hem eenige swackheyt ofte flauwicheyt mocht overkomen.

Translated into English, this reads:

“... That is partly why the method of belly cutting was introduced.”

A. Is the person who cuts his belly.

B. Is his helper in case any weakness or faintness should happen to him.”

With this information from the text and print from the other book the work of describing the print becomes a lot easier. Sometimes registration employees are lucky and sometimes one has to look further, e.g. into other books on the same subject or books that contain similar prints. And sometimes the internet is a useful source as well. This example also shows in a direct way that these prints were used and reused in different editions, and sometimes in different ways.

With the information thus obtained the following description was made:

Print of an image of a group of men in a square in front of a palace (D). In the middle a man is sitting cross-legged on the floor (A). This man will cut open his belly and take out his intestines and possibly slit his throat to follow his dead lord into death. Behind him is the helper (B) and in front of him is another (C) who hands him the knife. Behind him are the priests (E) who take care of the funeral and next to him are relatives and friends of the belly-cutter (F). In the rear is the watching crowd (G).

In the same book, a print depicting various torture methods was found. The print shows three different prints combined into one “Way of Justice in Japon.” These three prints are included as separate prints in the first book. This situation is found as well with more prints and especially maps. Minor changes are made to the print, e.g. the language of the title of the print, the legend, and the geographical indications.

Concluding Remarks

The project of describing and photographing prints and maps in the rare books collection at the Maritime Museum in Rotterdam is highly beneficial for several reasons. It is known that there are numerous unidentified maps and prints stored in these books. The Maritime Museum also learns to make connections between different prints in different books and also between prints in books and individual prints in the museum collection. The descriptions and pictures of the prints and maps in the online public catalogs receive much more attention from the public, particularly researchers. Other museums and institutions can also find these prints and maps and therefore the books themselves. Remarkably, the Maritime Museum has received significantly more loan requests since the project started.

The museum staff gains more and more fascinating new information and insights. With the bright lights properly illuminating the books when the prints and maps are photographed, the Maritime Museum can rightfully claim that its collection of rare books is showcased in the spotlights. Hidden treasures have rightly been made visible through the project.

