

Van Linschoten's Itinerario 1598, First Book, Chapter One: Discours of Voyages into y East & West Indies



Frontispiece: Gerard Mercator's map of the Arctic, published in his atlas of 1595. This map explains why the Dutch, discovering Spitsbergen, believed they had run into Greenland.

Being young and living idly in my native country, sometimes applying myself to the reading of histories and strange adventures, wherein I took no small delight, I found my mind so much addicted to see and travel into strange countries, thereby to seek some adventure, that in the end to satisfy myself I determined and was fully resolved for a time to leave my native country and my friends (although it grieved me). Yet the hope I had to accomplish my desire together with the resolution taken in the end overcame my affection and put me in good comfort to take the matter upon me, trusting in God that he would further my intent. Which

done, being resolved, I took leave of my parents who as then dwelt at Enkhuysen, and being ready to embark myself I went to a fleet of ships that as then laid before Texel, weighing the wind to sail for Spain and Portugal. I was determined to travel to Sevilla, where as then I had two brothers that had gone there several years before; so to help myself the better and by their means to know the manner and customs of those countries and also to learn the Spanish tongue.

And the 6th of December in the year of our Lord 1576 we put out of Texel with about 80 ships and set course for Spain. 9 December we passed between Dover and Calais [...]. Upon Christmas Day we entered into the river of St. Lucas de Barameda [Sanlucar de Barrameda] where I stayed two or three days and then traveled to Sevilla. On the first day of January I entered the city where I found one of my brothers. And although I had a special desire presently to travel further, yet for want of the Spanish tongue, without which one can hardly pass the country, I was constrained to stay there. In the mean time it chanced that Don Henry, the King of Portugal died, which caused great consternation and debate in Portugal for reason that the said King by his will and testament made Philip King of Spain, the son of his sister, lawful heir to the throne of Portugal. The Portuguese, always deadly enemies to the Spaniards, were wholly against it and elected to their King Don Antonio, Prior de Ocrato, brother's son to the King that died.

The King of Spain upon receiving this news prepared himself to go into Portugal to receive the crown, sending the Duke of Alva before him to cease the strife and pacify the matter. In the end, partly by force and partly by money, he brought the country under his subjection. Thereupon many men went out of Sevilla and other places into Portugal, where they hoped to find some better means. All was quiet in Portugal and Don Antonio was driven out of the country. My brother fell sick to a disease called Tuardilha, which at that time reigned throughout the whole country of Spain, whereof many thousands died; and among the rest my brother was one [died]. Not long before the plague had been so great in Portugal that in the timespan of two years 80,000 people died in Lisboa; after which plague, the said disease ensued which wrought great destruction.

On 5 August, having some understanding in the Spanish tongue, I placed myself with a Dutch gentleman who was determined to travel into Portugal to see the country. We departed from Sevilla on 3 September and after eight days arrived at Badajos, where I found my other brother following the Court. At the same time died Anne of Austria, Queen of Spain, the King's fourth wife; sister to Emperor

Rodolphus and daughter to the Emperor Maximilian. This caused great sorrow through all Spain: her body was conveyed from Badajos to the cloister of Saint Lawrence in El Escorial, where with great solemnity it was buried. After having traveled by several towns we arrived at Lisboa on 20 September, where at the time we found the Duke of Alva being Governor for the King of Spain; the whole city making great preparation for the coronation of the King. While staying in Lisboa I fell sick through the change of air and corruption of the country. During my sickness I was seven times let blood, yet by God's help I escaped. [...] About the same time the plague, not long before newly begunne, began again to cease, for which cause the King till then had deferred his entrance into Lisboa.

On the first day of May, 1581 the King entered with great triumph and magnificence into the city of Lisboa, where above all others the Dutch had the best and greatest commendation for views, which was a bridge that stood upon the river side where the King must first pass as he went out of his galley to enter into the city, being beautified and adorned with many costly and excellent things most pleasant to behold, every street and place within the city being hanged with rich clothes of tapestry and arras. In the same year on 12 December died the Duke of Alva in Lisboa in the King's palace. During his sickness over a period of fourteen days he received no sustenance but only women's milk. [...]

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2. Van Linschoten's Itinerario, 26. Chapter: Of The Island Of Japan

The island or the land of Japan is many islands one by the other, which are separated and divided only by certain small creeks and rivers. It is a great land, although as yet the circuit thereof is not known, because as yet it has not been explored, nor by the Portuguese sought into. It starts under 30 degrees and runs until you come to 38 degrees, lying about 80 miles east of the firm land of China.

The Portuguese travel about three hundred miles northeast from Macau. The Portuguese commonly lie in a harbor named Nagasaki, but also in others. The country is cold, proceeding of much rain, snow and ice that falls therein. It has some wheat-lands, but their common wheat is rice. In some places the land is very hilly and unfruitful. [...] The country has some mines of silver. The silver is yearly brought by the Portuguese to exchange for silk and other Chinese wares that the

Japanese have need of. The Japanese have among them very good craftsmen. They are sharp-witted and quickly learn anything they see. The common people of the land are much different from those of other nations, for that they have among them as great courtesy and good policy as if they had live continuously in the Court. They are very experienced in the use of their weapons as need requires, although they have little cause to use them. If anyone begins to draw his sword he is put to death. They have no prisons because he who deserves to be imprisoned is presently punished or banished from the country. When they mean to lay hold upon a man, they must do it by stealth and deceit, for otherwise he would resist and do much mischief. If it be a gentleman or man of great authority, [...] he often chooses to be killed by his servants. And it is often seen that they rip their own bellies open, which is often likewise done by servants for the love of their masters. The like do young boys in presence of their parents, only for grief or some small anger. They are in all their actions very patient and humble, for that in their youth they learn to endure hunger, cold, and all manner of labor, to go bareheaded, with few clothes, as well as in winter as in summer. They account it for great beauty to have no hair, which with great care they pluck out, only to retain a pluck of hair on the crown of their heads, which they tie together.

In the land of Japan they only eat the meat of wild animals and these are hunted with great expertise. They have cattle like cows and sheep, but cannot eat those, as we refuse horse meat. They don't take milk or milk products, like we don't drink blood, because they say that milk although it is white, yet it is true blood. They enjoy fish, of which they have many kinds, as well as all kinds of fruit, as in China. Their houses are commonly covered with wood and straw, and built fine and workman-like, especially the rich men's houses. [...] Their manner of eating and drinking is: every man has a table alone, without table-clothes or napkins, and eateth with two pieces of wood, like the men of China. They drink wine of rice, wherewith they drink themselves drunk, and after their meat they use a certain drink, which is a pot with hot water, which they drink as hot as ever they may endure, whether it be winter or summer.

[...] The aforesaid warm water is made with the powder of a certain herb called *Chaa*, which is much esteemed, and is well accounted of among them. The said water is kept in a secret place and the gentlemen make it themselves, and when they entertain some friends, they give them some of that warm water to drink. The pots wherein the herb is kept, with the earthen cups they drink it in, are

esteemed as much as we do of Diamonds, Rubies, and other precious stones, and they are not esteemed for their newness, but for their oldness, and for that they were made by a good workman. To know and keep such by themselves, they take great and special care. As with us the goldsmith values silver and gold: so if their pots and cups are of an old and excellent making they are worth 4 or 5 thousand ducats or more the piece. The King of Bungo did give for such a pot, having three feet, 14 thousand ducats. They do likewise esteem much of any picture or table, wherein is painted a black tree or a black bird, and when they know it is made of wood, and by an ancient master, they give whatsoever you will ask for it. [...] And when we ask them, why they esteem them so much, they ask us again why we esteem so well of our precious stones and jewels, which serve to no use. [...] Their religion is much like the Chinese, they have their Idols and ministers, which they call *Bon*, and hold them in great estimation, but since the time of the Jesuits being among them, there have been many baptized and become Christians. The number of Christians increases daily; among those are the kings of Arima, Omura, and Bungo.

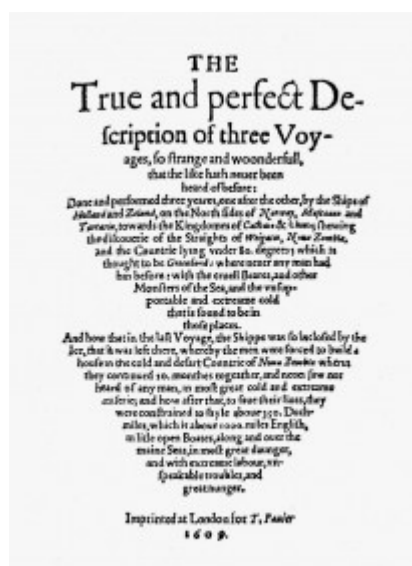
The King of Bungo is amongst the most important kings of Japan. [...] They send their sons and nephews via Goa to Madrid and Rome, where they are received by the King and nobles of Spain, and the Pope, who did them great honor and bestowed many presents on them. After travelling to Florence, Venice, Ferrara, etc., they returned to Madrid with letters from Pope Sixtus, and some holy relics of the cross that Christ died on, to present to the Christian kings of Japan. In the end they arrived in India again, during my being there, which was Anno 1587, and were received with great joy. So they set sail to Japan, where again they were received with great admiration. [...]

The Jesuits, then, thought it best to christen all Japanese and teach them the magnificence of the country of Europe. However, the principal reason and intent of the Jesuits was to reap great profit, and to get much praise and commendation. Most of the gifts given to them by the princes of Japan fell to their shares; they likewise obtained from the Pope and the King of Spain that no man might dwell in Japan, either Portuguese or Christian, without their license and consent, so that in all Japan there are no other orders of monks, friars, priests, but Jesuits alone. [...] They have almost all of the country under their subjection; such I mean as are converted to the faith of Christ, making the Japanese believe what they wish, whereby they are honored like gods. The Japanese make such great account of

them that they do almost pray to them, as if they were Saints. They had obtained so much favor of the Pope, that he granted them a bishop of their order (which is contrary to their profession), who came out of Portugal to be bishop of Japan, but died underway. [...] There is not anything from which they will not suck or draw out some profit or advantage. [...] It seemed in a manner that they bewitch men with their subtle practices and devices, and are so well practiced and experimented in trade of merchandise, that they surpass all worldly men. To conclude, there is not any commodity to be had or reaped throughout all India, or they have their part therein, so that the other orders and religious persons, as also the common people, do much murmur thereat, and seem to dislike of their courteous humors.

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3. Gerrit De Veer's True And Perfect Description 1598: Dedication



Title page of the 1598 English edition of De Veer's work.

To the Noble, Mighty, Wise, Discreet, very Provident Lords States General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands and the Council of States, and the Provincial States of Holland, Zeeland, and West Friesland - and also the Serene Highness and lord Maurits, born Prince of Orange, Count of Nassau, Katzenelleboge, Vianden, Diets, etc., Marquis of Veere and Vlissingen etc., Lord of Saint Vith, Doesburg, the town of Grave and the Land of Cuijk etc., Stadholder and Commander-in-chief of Gelderland, Holland, Zeeland, West-Friesland, Utrecht en Overijssel etc. and Admiral at Sea; and to the Noble, Honorable,

Wise, Discreet Lords the Commisioners of the Admiralty in Holland, Zeeland, and West-Friesland. Gentlemen. The art of navigation exceeds in utility all other arts; during the past years this science has wonderfully improved and has brought especially our countries great prosperity, notably by skilful piloting, and experience in the measuring of latitudes and bearings of countries according to the rules of mathematical science; as a result of which we sail to all countries lying at the very end of the world and return their products. This demonstrates that the science of navigation, which has emerged from cosmography, is of greater service than any other in the world, because she does not merely offer science, but also has application in the description of bearings, courses, capes,

promontories and their respective coordinates, which have not even been mentioned by Ptolemy or Strabo and remained unknown long after those two existed, but which have come to our knowledge as a result of research and development of this knowledge. Many places that were previously unknown have only been found after repeated effort, and likewise attempts by our countries investigating whether one would be able to find a passage to the Kingdoms of Cathay and China round by the North, which have been unsuccessful until now, do not remain entirely fruitless or hopeless.

Hence I have made a short description of the aforementioned journeys (in the last two of which I was engaged) sent from our countries, along the north of Norway, Muscovia, and Tartaria to the named Kingdoms of Cathay and China, because during these voyages many noteworthy events have passed. I think that the right course may still be discovered, as the direction and position of Vaygach and Novaya Zemlya are now ascertained, as well as the eastern cape of Greenland (as we call it) at 80 degrees [Spitsbergen], in a location where it was formerly believed that there would be only water and no land, and there at 80 degrees it is less cold than at Novaya Zemlya at 76 degrees. At those 80 degrees in June early in the summer there was grass and green things growing and animals were grazing, while at 76 degrees in August, during the peak of summer, there was neither any green leaves nor grass, nor animals that feed on grass. From this it appears that not the proximity of the Pole causes the ice and cold, but the Tartarian [Kara] Sea (called the Ice Sea) and the proximity of land, where the ice floats close to. Because in the open sea between the land at 80 degrees and Novaya Zemlya, which lie 200 [German] miles [1260 km] apart ENE and WSW, there was little or no ice, but soon as we approached land, we immediately entered into cold and ice; yes because of the ice we knew we were close to land, before we could even see it.

Furthermore on the east side of Novaya Zemlya, where we wintered, the ice drifted away with W and SW wind and returned with NE wind. From all this it appears that between both lands there is an open sea and that it is possible to sail much closer to the pole than has previously been assumed. And notwithstanding the ancient writers, who argue that the sea within 20 degrees of the pole is unnavigable because of the intense cold and that on account of the cold nobody can live there, we have been at 80 degrees and at 76 degrees with limited means have passed the winter. It therefore seems that between those lands one would be

able to complete the voyage holding a NE course from Norway's North Cape. This too was the opinion of Willem Barents, the famous navigator, and Jacob Heemskerck, our captain and supercargo; that they, if they would hold that course, would succeed if God granted them to. Notwithstanding that during our last journey through our manifold difficulties we were totally exhausted and often in peril of death, yet it did not break our courage and if our ship (which remained locked in the ice) had been released in time, we would once more have ventured on that same course to demonstrate that we believe that it can be done, although this last journey had been very difficult and we (speaking without vanity) have not avoided any labor, effort, or danger to come to the desired end, as the story will show; but neither time nor fate permitted it. And because the said three journeys occurred at Your Lordships' expenses and the result that would have come out of it would have been Yours, I have taken the liberty of dedicating this narrative (which if not an eloquent, is at least a faithful one) to Your Lordships. Praying to God that he will bless Your Lordships' wise government, in the honor of His name, and for the prosperity of these States, from Amsterdam, the last day but one of April, in the year 1598, Your noble, mighty, illustrious, E., wise, provident Lordships' indebtedly, Gerrit de Veer

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4. *Gerrit De Veer's True And Perfect Description: Introduction*



4 June 1596: "Plate of a miraculous heaven" depicts the phenomenon of sun dogs, caused by ice crystals high in the atmosphere.

It is a most certain and assured assertion, that nothing doth more benefit and further the common-wealth (specially in these countries) than the art and knowledge of navigation, in regard that such countries and nations are mighty and strong at sea, have the means and ways to draw, fetch, and bring the principal commodities and fruits of the earth [...], and carry and convey to the same places such wares and merchandise whereof they have great store and abundance [...]. There are continually more voyages made and strange coasts discovered; perhaps not in a first, second, or third journey but [only in full extent] by continuance of time reaped. [...] As long as the results are useful, there is no more meaningful exertion than toil in the common good and benefit of all

men, whatever the unskillful, disdainers, and deriders of men's diligence may say. [...] The famous navigators Columbus, Cortez, [Vasco] Nonius [de Balboa], and Magellan, (who discovered distant islands and kingdoms) [...] did not leave off and give over their navigation after the first voyage [...] Alexander the Great (after he had won Greece and from there Little and Great Asia) said: 'If we had not gone forward and persisted in our intent, doing what others found impossible, we would have stayed at Sicily instead of going through all those great countries, for there is nothing that is started and completed at the same time'. To which end Cicero wisely said: 'God has given us some and not all things so that our successors will have something to do'. Therefore, one shouldn't stop midway whenever there's even the remotest chance of some achievement, for the greatest and richest treasures are the hardest to find. [...] Let us look to the White Sea north of Muscovy that is now so commonly sailed. Is this not the same long voyage it was before it had become completely explored? True, but finding the correct route, previously requiring reconnoitering via careful cruising, has made the difficult voyage a routine. [...]

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*5. Barents Reaches His Northernmost Latitude In 1594**



Willem Barents' signature on the winterers' apologia.

The 29th of July [1594] the height of the sun was taken with the cross-staff, astrolabium, and quadrant and found to be 32 degrees above the horizon. Because her declination is 19 degrees this subtracted from 32 degrees leaves 13, which subtracted from 90 gives 77 degrees. Here the nearest north point of Novaya Zemlya, called the Ice Cape, lay right east of them. There they found certain stones that glittered like gold, which for that reason they called gold-stones, and they had a faire bay with sandy ground. [...] From the Ice Cape they went east a little south 6 miles to the Islands of Orange; there they tacked between the land and the ice, with fair still weather, and upon the 31 of July [1594] got to the Islands of Orange. And on one of those islands they found about 200 walruses or seahorses, lying upon the shore to bask themselves in the sunne.

This seahorse is a wonderful strong monster of the sea, much bigger than an ox, which keeps continually in the seas, having a skin like a sea-calf or seal, with very short hair. It is mouthed like a lion, and many times they lie upon the ice; they are difficult to kill unless you strike them just upon the forehead. It has four feet but no ears and commonly it has one or two young at a time. And when the fishermen chance to find them on an ice floe they cast their young into the water. The mother then takes it in her arms and so plunges up and down with it, and when she will revenge herself on one of the boats, she casts her young from her again and with all her force will attack that boat, whereby our men once were in no small danger, for that the sea horse had almost stricken her teeth into the stern of the boat with the intention to overthrow it [...]. They have two teeth sticking out of their mouths, on each side one, each being about half an ell long, and these are esteemed to be as good as any ivory or elephant's teeth, specially in Muscovia [Russia], Tartaria [Siberia], and thereabouts where they are known (Note: In 1594 one Francis Cherry imported 595 kg (1311 lb) of walrus ivory from Arctic Russia [Vaughan 1994]). Our men, supposing that they could not defend themselves being out of the water went on shore to assail some sea horses that lay basking on the beach, to get their teeth that are so rich, but they broke all their hatchets, cutlasses, and pikes in pieces and could not kill one of them, but [285] struck some of their teeth out of their mouths, which they took with them. [...]

Willem Barents had begun his journey on the 5th of June 1594 and set sail out of Texel, arriving before Kildin Moscovia on the 23 of the same month, and then set course to the north side of Novaya Zemlya, wherein he continued to the 1st of August till he came to the Islands of Orange [...]. Finding that he could hardly get through, to accomplish his intended voyage, his men began to become weary and refused to sail further, so they agreed to turn back and meet with the other [Zeeland and Enkhuizen] ships that had set course for Vaygach to find what discoveries had been made there.

Appendices

* De Veer copied the journal of the first expedition, in which he did not participate, probably from Barents' log, converting 'we' into 'they' (errata on e.g. 18 and 23 July 1594). On the map the farthest point reached during this first expedition is named Cape Desire, signifying the desire to continue across the Pole, which translated into Russian has become Mys Zhelaniya.

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6. *Jan Huyghen Van Linschoten 's Voyage Round By The North 1601*

[Introduction] According to the writings of the Ancients, like those of Nepos, Pliny and others, there is a way round by the north to Cathay (northern China) and China. Some Indians that came from the Far East fell through a storm on the Norwegian coast. Hence it is certain that they came into the Atlantic Ocean by way of Strait Yugor. So why is it that this passage is so hard to find? [...] On the 11th [September 1595] the Admiral called another meeting to consider whether we would undertake one more attempt and see whether we would be able to get through. So was decided. We set sail under a stormy wind but after three hours large ice masses obstructed our further progress and we lavedered back to the Twist Cape (Cape Quarrel) and from there through open water to the Cross Cape. Here we anchored because the storm intensified. I used the opportunity the measure the tides and the direction of flow of low tide and high tide.

This strengthened my opinion that the sea east of the strait is a continuing sea. Several men went ashore and discovered a whale stripped by the Samoyedes. The cheekbones measured 16 feet. They brought five for display as oddity in our country. One may see them in the Doelen in Enkhuizen and another one in the city hall of Haarlem; I presented them to these cities for eternal memory, and love for patria.



a. Willem Barents; b. Jan Huyghen van Linschoten; c. Jacob Heemskerck; d. Petrus Plancius; e. Jan Cornelisz Rijp

[13 September 1595] The storm came from the SW and grew so powerful that it seemed as if heaven and earth united. We lowered all sails and dropped a second anchor. Our boats filled with water and in

the midst of the tempest we feared that our lines and anchors would not hold. The skippers said that they had never experienced anything like this; however the storm passed without causing damage. Now that I have been through this it does not surprise me that there is so much driftwood high on the beaches. [...] To our dismay we saw large amounts of ice floating back into the Yugor Strait. We immediately hauled the anchors and tacked about past the Cross Cape. During the night Vaygach had been covered with snow. We were much surprised to see the ice return because it had seemed as if the storms of the past few days had cleared the way for at least six days' sailing. From this we understood that we

should not hope that the situation would improve this year. Under sail we gathered on the admiral's vessel and prepared a statement to summarize the reasons that would make us decide to return home. This statement is: 'Today the 15th of September 1595 we met near Cross Cape on the orders of Admiral Nay and each without further dissimulation gave our opinion as to what could be done within the breadth of our instructions.

After it has been concluded that we have tried our utmost to answer to our duty and responsibility we declare that God does not want to grant us success and the ice has prevented us from reaching our destination. [The continued presence of sea ice] we explain from last year's severe winter. [De la Dale: The most severe winter in living memory *[Mollema 1947]*; Therefore we unanimously decided that we should use the first opportunity to sail home in order to save our ships and escape the onset of freezing and winter, protesting before God and the world that we fulfilled our duty and trusting that all the signatories would never speak differently, that we would continue to defend our point of view and that our logs should show the same. To ensure that on return there would not be any rumors started or blame spread that could damage our reputations, even though we voluntarily faced dangers for the glory of our fatherland, we agreed to sign this declaration, which has been composed by Jan Huyghen van Linschoten with Francois de la Dale'. [...]

On this day we had a breeze from the NE and during the night sailed out of the strait. Snow showers and hail accompanied our departure as heralds of winter. It was so cold that our sail hardened and my breath froze into my moustache. The water however was free of ice with just the individual floe. It seems to me that this confirms the information of the Samoyeds and Russians that there is a passage between Vaygach and Novaya Zemlya, through which the ice is transported into the Kara Sea. [...] Between Novaya Zemlya and Cape Tabin [Cape Chelyuskin] there must be a channel as between the heads of Dover and Calais. This stops the ice from floating east or north and it assembles into large ice fields and wind nor sea have sufficient power to break the ice, because the ice fields dampen the sea and prevent swell, which normally breaks the ice. The warmth of the sun one can easily forget because it means nothing in this region. [...]

On the 24th the weather worsened beyond description. Hailstorm followed on hailstorm, the sea and the heavens became one and it was dark so we could not

see a ship's length ahead. During a short clearing we saw straight ahead snowcovered land, where we would certainly have run aground because our estimated position was 20 miles out of the coast. The maps of this region are not good [...]. The next day the sky cleared; some showers remained, but the fury of the past few days had gone. We guessed that the land we had seen yesterday was Svyatoi Noss [Kola Peninsula]. We tacked about to and from the coast but did not make much progress. [...]

[28 September 1595] Around this time scurvy started to spread. It began with stiffness in the limbs and waist and rotting gums, which was painful to see. The cold and nasty humidity causes all this. Also the lack of refreshing and clean clothes did much damage; it felt terrible to be helpless against these threats. [...]

[8 October 1595] Weather was boisterous and dark again. During the night our yachts got separated from us and we continued with the Admiral. In the evening the sun appeared, which surprised us because we hadn't seen her for a long time. Soon the wind increased from the north and to our joy we were able to sail west again. We thank God passed the North Cape and the northern winds did no longer hinder us; on the contrary it brought us much pleasure. [...] We estimated our latitude to be 73.5 degrees. On the 9th there was such a powerful snowstorm that the entire ship was covered by it. It was so cold that we were unable to manipulate the main sail and had to beat it with sticks before we were able to set it [...] Due to poor sight we also lost track of the Admiral and continued by ourselves. Overall we made good progress. [...] In the rare clear nights there is much more light here than in our country, the stars almost shine as bright as the Moon. If one happens to have a clear night one may see the amazing radiation of the 'northern light' as seamen call this phenomenon, a play of colored rays, which emits a wonderful light that fills a man with awe. Anyone, who sails in the High North knows the 'northern light' and in this region it occurs frequently when the winter night draws near.



The interior of the Sved House, as depicted in the German edition of the "True and Perfect Description" (Hulsius 1598). This plate accurately depicts the lamp that burned day and night (27 October 1596; 12–13 February 1597), the wise barrel turned into a steam bath (4 November 1596), the hunk, kettle (Fig. 7.8), and clock (Fig. 7.9). When the clock froze, the passing of time was recorded with an hourglass.

On the 12 [October 1595] we saw the sun and could finally measure an afternoon height. Our latitude appeared to be $73^{\circ}20'$ and we estimated to be off the coast of Tromsø. This is the same latitude as Vaygach, Kanin, or Svyatoi-Nos, but here it wasn't as cold as it was there, even though it was later in the season. This is remarkable but one may explain it from the large amounts of sea ice near Vaygach, which probably severely cool the air. It remains an open question why in these

areas, even when there is no ice, it can be so much colder than west of the North Cape. Our human intellect cannot grasp: we are too insignificant to fathom God's wonders.

Who in ancient times would have believed that one may be able to navigate the 'Zona frigida' north of the Arctic circle, yes that even people are living there. Likewise people did not believe that the 'Torrida zona' is navigable and habitable. Here the scorching-swelting heat, there the unbearable cold would prohibit it. And still the unthinkable has appeared to be possible, as I have found, although I must admit that the intemperate of the Cold Zone is incomparably worse than that of the tropics. It is understandable because what should one expect in October at a latitude of 74°N , when the sun has a southern declination of 7° and therefore is 81° distant. Something like that was unimaginable to the Ancients and it still makes us feel humble. [...]

On the 15th we crossed the Arctic Circle and had finally escaped the intemperate zone. The wind blew from the north but it was warmer than the warmest winds around the North Cape, although our latitudes do not differ that much. The explanation I gladly leave to those who are more familiar with the sciences of physics and astronomy and heavenly effects; I leave the rest to the care of God. [...] On the 18th we sighted Statland at $62^{\circ}10'\text{N}$, we saw a sail on the lee side and were hoping it was one of ours, but it disappeared in the coast so it was probably a Norwegian. With quick pace we sailed along the coast, which did not show any snow. This is quite a miracle because at the North Cape it snowed and hailed continuously and here it wasn't any colder than with us in Fall. How does this

agree with the hypothesis of the learned astronomers and cosmographers in our country, who, without any personal experience maintain that at 60° it is as cold as at 70°? If these gentlemen would themselves ever sail along, they would certainly learn to appreciate observation more than theoretical knowledge. [...]

On the 24th [October 1595] the storm settled but a good breeze continued. The water became whitish and earthy so that we estimated to have reached the south side of the Dogger Bank, which during the night we probed at 15 fathom [~25.7 m]. The sky cleared during the evening and at night in the moonlight we sailed between the herring boats and contacted one. They informed us that Texel was to the SE, which agreed with our estimate. We passed another fisherman the next day and then a Rotterdammer coming from Norway. In the afternoon we spotted the coast of our fatherland. We got a bearing on the cathedral of Haarlem and put our location between Beverwijk and Zandvoort. About three miles off the coast we sailed north and the 26th we anchored on the roadstead of Texel. We had been out for four months and came home the majority of the men sick from scurvy and other illnesses. On our home journey we mourned two deaths: the bottler who died four days before our return and the provost who passed away in the night of our sailing inside. We could therefore bury the provost in Huisduinen a grave in the earth. We found out that there was no word on any of the other ships from our expedition and prayed to God to bring them home safely. With this the Principalest King and Lord is glorified and praised from now to eternity Amen.

Conclusion or Epilogue. The above is the account of our farings during the journey of 1595; from day to day, from hour to hour I accurately kept notes without adding or removing anything later. I hope and expect that my fellow travellers [Barents] will acknowledge the truth of what has been put down. Our principals who no doubt had been inspired by God commissioned this great endeavor without caring for costs and although God did not want us to succeed, because a lengthy winter had barely ended, I am of the opinion that we should not give up this cause and should not forget our heroic attempt. More research is needed to get insight into the possibilities. The greater the effort and objections, the more respectable the work is and the purer the ultimate triumph.

The backdrops have not been so severe that we should consider the northern seaway impossible. Seasons do differ and we experienced that. The Portuguese didn't discover the east Indies on their first journey. Many years passed before they found the right conjunction of circumstances and before that, their efforts

were in vain. [...]

Should your Lords however be of the opinion that enough has been done and we should let the matter rest, then I still have the submissive request to grant me the right for publication* of my journals and drawings, in order to let truth prevail and the Prince, and you, My Lords, who took the laudable initiative for the venture, will get your well-deserved praise for your involvement. Through my work the world will know what has been done and found and all rumors and

false messages that are sold with the necessary adornments will be silenced. My journals may inspire others to continue on the road travelled, and this would be my greatest reward for all trouble and dangers. Also the Lords can be assured that I will be available when I am needed in their service.

* On 20 May 1597 Van Linschoten was awarded for 10 years the rights to publish both journals. Penalty for infringement on these rights was set at 600 Flemish pounds, a third of which was to be made out to the author, a third to the executor, and a third to the poor [*translated from Mollema 1947, p. 204-213*].

* * *

7. Van Linschoten 's Round By The North 1601: The Beginning Of Whaling

[14 July 1594, between Kolguev Island and the mainland] we entertained ourselves with the whale hunt. Some of those animals came swimming onto our roadstead; we jumped into the boats and drove some in shallow water, but for lack of harpoons we could not do much more. At last we caught one, we threw a harpoon in its back which caused him to swim around fiercely, while the water colored red with its blood. The boats chased it until it was exhausted and had to give up the fight. Then the men towed it onto the shore and skinned it; the blubber was packed in barrels to make train oil. It was a young animal but already fearful to behold. The monster was 34 feet long, its tail 8 feet wide, and on both sides of the lower jaw it had 268 feathers, which are called baleens. We won 20 barrels of blubber from this animal, but the meat, guts, and skin we left as unusable waste, and also the liver which alone weighed three tons. We did not have enough barrels to store it all. As we were cutting the whale, his partner often surfaced at a stone's throw and watched the spectacle. We could easily have caught it but let him be because we did not have enough barrels. The whales came close to shore every evening; they appear to breed here. Whale hunting

would be profitable if one came here well equipped.*

Appendices

* De Moucheron was quick to speculate with this bit of information in his letter to the States of Holland and Zeeland on 6 April 1595 (Chapter 4): “A large part of the costs of a fortification [of the Yugor Strait] can be won back with the letting out of permits for whale hunting and the hunt of seal and walrus. Train oil represents a value greater than the expenses of a fort, because these animals abound in the sea”. Although whales had been known for more than twenty years for their industrial potential as a resource of train oil and baleens, Van Linschoten described the killing of the first known whale to fall victim to Europeans other than Basques [Vaughan 1994]. The whale bone found on Vaygach Island and kept in Haarlem’s City Hall (11 September 1595) suggests that this whale was a bowhead (*Balaena mysticetus*), the only large whale species endemic to the Arctic, today almost extinct.

* * *

8. De Veer: Encounter With The ‘Samoyeds’



Samoyeds and their kingdom (Hulsius #10), with firearms demonstration in background.

Their apparition is like we used to paint wild men; but they are not wild, because they are of reasonable judgement. They dress in deer skins from head to feet, unless it be the chief among them, which, man or woman, are dressed like the others, as said, except for their heads, which they cover with a colored cloth lined with fur. The others wear caps of deerskin, with the rough side out, which close around their heads. They have long hair, which they braid with a long tail on their backs. They are (most of them) short and of low stature, with broad flat faces, small eyes, short legs, their knees standing outward, and they are very quick [...] Their sledges stood always ready with one or two deer, which run so swiftly with one or two men in them that our horses would not be able to follow them. One of our men shot a musket towards the sea, wherewith they were in such great fear that they ran and leapt like mad

men; yet at last they calmed down when they perceived that it was not maliciously done to hurt them. We told them by our interpreter, that we used our pieces instead of bows, whereat they wondered, because of the great blow and noise that it gave. To show them what we could do with [our muskets], one of our men took a flat stone about half and a handful broad, and set it upon a hill a good way off from him. They perceived that we meant [to demonstrate] somewhat thereby, and fifty or sixty of them gathered around us, yet somewhat far off. He with the musket shot it and when the bullet smashed the stone in pieces they wondered even more than before. After that we parted, with great friendship on both sides; and when we were in our boat, we all put off our hats and bowed our heads unto them, sounding our trumpet. They in their manner saluted us and then went back to their sledges [31 August 1595].

* * *

9. Through The Arctic Night And Observation Of The 'Novaya Zemlya Effect'

15 December [1596] it was bright weather. That day we caught two foxes and saw the moon rise ESE, when it was 26 days old, in the sign of Scorpio. [On 16 December] we had no more wood in the house and had to go out to get more, which we had to dig out of the snow. [...] This we did taking turns, two and two together, wherein we were forced to use great speed, for we could not long endure without the house, because of the inexpressible, intolerable cold, even though we wore the fox skins on our heads and double apparel on our backs. [...] On 18 December we went out to the ship to see how it was and hoping to catch a fox. Below decks we found none but in the hold when we had stricken fire to inspect the water level we discovered a fox, which we caught and brought to the house to eat, and found that in eighteen days the water had risen about a finger and the barrels with drinking water we brought from Holland were frozen solidly.

19 December it was fair weather with a wind from the south. Then we comforted each other that the sun was on the other side of the globe and ready to come to us again. We sorely longed for it; [...] the greatest comfort that God sent onto man here upon the earth and that in which every living thing rejoices.

[...] The 22nd of December it was foul weather with lots of snow and wind from the southwest, blocking our door again, so we had to dig ourselves out, which we now did almost every day. 23 December, foul weather, wind southwest with lots of

snow, but we were comfortable knowing that the sun was on its way to us again, for (we calculated) that day it had reached the Tropic of Capricorn, which is the utmost limit it reaches before returning north. This Tropicus Capricorni lies south of the equinoctial line at 23 degrees and 18 minutes.



12 June 1597: "Plate of how we with great effort leveled a way across the ice." Although the plates by De Bry in the German (*Hulsias*) edition are less artistic than the Dutch edition plates, they are more informative. Plate #27, shown here, includes the *Saved House* as it was left behind: partly torn down.

24 December, Christmas eve, it was fair weather. Then we opened our door again and though there was no daylight we could see much open water in the sea, as we had heard the ice crack and drive. [...] On Christmas day it was foul weather with northwest wind and despite the weather we heard foxes running over our house, wherewith some of the men said it was a bad sign. We disputed why this would be a bad sign and some of our men answered it would be better if we could catch some

and put them in the pot or on the spit, then it would have been a very good sign. On the 26 with foul weather it was so extraordinarily cold that we were unable to keep ourselves warm, by all means: with a large fire, extra clothes, and heated stones and cannon balls around our feet and body as we lay in our bunks. In the morning the bunks were frosted white which made us behold one the other with sad countenance. But we comforted ourselves again as well as we could that the sun was on its way back to us and as the proverb goes 'days that lengthen are days that strengthen'; hope put us in good comfort and eased our pain. [...]

The 24th of January [1597] it was fair calm weather, with a southwest wind. The four of us went to the ship and comforted each other, thanking God that the most difficult part of winter had passed, in good hope that we would live to talk of those things back home in our own country. While we were in the ship we found that the water in it had risen higher. We all took a biscuit or two and went back. On the 24th it was fair, clear weather again, still with a west wind. I went with Jacob Heemskerck and another one to the end of the cape where, totally unexpected, we saw the top edge of the sun, I first, and we hurried home to tell Willem Barents and the others the joyful news. [The sun had not been seen since 4 November]. However, Willem Barents being a wise and experienced pilot did not believe it, estimating that it was fourteen days too soon for the sun to shine in

this part of the world. We earnestly affirmed that we had seen the sun and bets were laid. The next days it was misty and overcast and we couldn't see anything. Those who betted against us thought they had won, but the 27th it was clear and bright weather and we all saw the sun in its full roundness above the horizon. [This observation] was clean contrary to the opinions of all old and new writers, yes, contrary to the nature and roundness both of heaven and earth. Some of us said that because we had lived in the night for such a long time we might have overslept ourselves, with respect to which we well know the contrary. Considering this spectacle in itself God is wonderful in all his works, we refer for that to his almighty powers, and leave it to others to dispute. But for that no man shall think that we doubt [the accuracy of our measurements] we present some declaration thereof [...]. Otherwise I leave the discussion to those who make their profession of it; suffice to say that we were not mistaken with respect to the time.

* * *

10. Escape From Novaya Zemlya And Barents' Dying



The "Plate of a cruel bear" of 12 February 1597 has a detail in the German edition that does not appear on the original plate in the Dutch edition: the burial of the "sicke".

The 13 June [1597] it was fair weather. The master and the carpenters went to the ship and prepared the boat and the sloop. The master and those that were with him, seeing that there was open water and a good west wind, came back to the house and he said to Willem Barents (who had long been sick) that it was a good time to leave. They resolved jointly with the ship's company to take the boat and the sloop to the waterside and in the name of God

begin our voyage to sail away from Novaya Zemlya. Willem Barents had previously written a small scroll, which he then placed inside a bandoleer and hung in the chimney. [...] The master also wrote two letters, [...] one for each of our sloops in case we would lose each other by storms or other misadventure [...]. And so, having finished all things as we determined, we drew the boat to the waterside and left a man in it, and went back to fetch the sloop, and after that eleven sledges with goods, such as victuals and some wine that yet remained, and the merchants goods of which we took every care to preserve as much as possible, viz. 6 packs with the finest woolen cloth, a chest with linen, two packets

of velvet, two small chests with money, two trunks with men's clothes such as shirts and other things, 13 barrels of bread, a barrel with cheese, a fletch of bacon, two runlets of oil, 6 small runlets of wine, two runlets of vinegar, packs and cloths belonging to the sailors. Piled altogether one would not believe that it would fit in the boats. Which being all put away, we went to the house and first drew Willem Barents on a sledge to the waterside, and then fetched Claes Andriesz; both of them had long been ill. So we got into the boats, equally dividing ourselves between them, and with a patient in each. The master asked that the boats were aligned together so that we could sign our names under both letters. After that we committed ourselves to the will and mercy of God; with a WNW wind and open water, we set sail and put to the sea.

The 14th of June in the morning with the sun in the east [ca. 4 a.m.] we put off from the land of Nova Zembla and the fast ice thereunto adjoining, with our boat and sloop, and sailed ENE all day to Eylandt's Hoek, which is five miles [1 German mile = 6.3 km: Verhoeff 1983]. We didn't start off very well because we came between ice floes which were lying together hard and fast and it put us in no small fear and trouble. Four of us went ashore to explore the situation. In the cliffs we caught four birds, which we killed with stones. The 15th of June the ice drifted away and we went under sail again with a south wind, passing by Hooft Hoek en Vlissinger Hooft, stretching northeast to the Cabo van Begeerte (Cape Desire, Mys Zhelaniya): 13 [German] miles. There we lay until 16 June. [16 June 1597] We got to the Orange Islands with a south wind, which is 8 [German] miles from Cape Desire; there we went ashore with two small barrels and a kettle, to melt snow and put the water in the barrels, and also to search for birds and eggs for our ill, and being there we made fire with the driftwood that we found there, but we found no birds. Three of our men went over the ice to the other island and caught three birds. As they came back, our master (one of the three) fell through the ice, and feared for his life because there was a strong current, but by God's help he came out and came to us to dry himself by the fire that we had made. [...] We filled our two runlets with water that held about eight gallons a piece; which done we put to sea again with a southeast wind and nasty drizzly weather, whereby we became all damp and wet, for we had no shelter in our open boats. We sailed west to the Ice Cape and when we arrived there, we put our boats hard by each other and the master called to Willem Barents how he was doing and Willem Barents answered: 'Well mate, thank God, I hope to walk before we get to Waardhuus'. Then he spoke to me and said: 'Gerrit, if we come about the Ice Cape

you should lift me up again, I must see that cape once more'. We had sailed from the Orange Islands to Ice Cape about 5 [German] miles and the wind went round to the west, so we attached our boats to the ice floes and there ate somewhat; but the weather became fouler and fouler and the ice enclosed us and forced us to stay there. [...]

[17 June 1597] We drove away so forcefully with the ice and were pressed sorely between the ice floes that we thought verily that the boats would burst into a hundred pieces, which made us look pitifully at each other because good counsel was dear. Every instant we saw death before our eyes. At last someone suggested we should take a rope onto the fast ice, so that we may draw the sloop out of the icedrift. [...] This was a good advice but no man dared to follow through for fear of drowning. In that perplexity and with little choice (it is easy to risk a drowned calf) I being the lightest of our company took it on me to carry the rope onto the fast ice, crawling from one floe to the other. With God's help I reached the fast ice and tied the rope to a tall hill. [...] As we all had gotten there in all haste we took the ill out of the boats and laid them on the ice, with clothes underneath them, and threw all our goods onto the fast ice, whereby for that moment we had escaped danger and been delivered from the jaws of death. [...]

The 20 of June it was indifferent weather, the wind west, and when the sun was southeast [~7 a.m.], Claes Andriesz began to be extremely sick, whereby we perceived that he would not live long. The boatsman came into our scute and told us in what case he was and that he could not long continue alive; whereupon Willem Barents spoke: 'I guess with me too it will not last long'. Yet we did not judge Willem Barents to be so sick, because we sat talking one with the other and spoke of many things, and Willem Barents studied the map that I had made during our voyage (and we had some discussion about it). Then he put away the map and said 'Gerrit, can you give me something to drink', and he had no sooner drunk or he was taken with so sudden a qualm, that he turned his eyes in his head and presently died. We had no time to call the master out of the other boat to talk to him; he died before Claes Andriesz, who died shortly after him. The death of Willem Barents put us in no small discomfort as being the chief guide and only pilot on whom we reposed ourselves. But before God we are helpless and had to submit ourselves.

The 21 of June the ice began to drive away again and God made us some opening with a SSW wind and when the sun was about NW [midnight] the wind began to

blow SE with a good gale and we began to make preparations to go from thence. The next morning there blew a good gale out of the southeast and the sea was reasonably open. We drew our boats over the ice to get to it, which was a great pain and labor to us, because we first needed to go over a piece of ice [snow?] of 50 paces long and then put the boats into the water, and then again pull them onto the ice and pull them at least a 100 paces, before we would come to a place where we could get out. [...]

* * *

11. Return Of The Netherlanders To The North Russian Coast In 1597

TABLE 2: Crew accounted for by De Veer

Signed Barents' statement before departure on 23 June 1597	'Have returned' according to De Veer on 29 October 1597*	Neither
1. Jacob Heemskerck (commander)	Jacob Heemskerck	
2. Willem Barents (pilot) † 21/6/97		
3. Pieter Pietersz Vos (first mate)	Pieter Pietersz Vos	
4. Gerrit de Veer	Gerrit de Veer	
5. Meester Hans Vos ('surgeon')	Meester Hans Vos	
6. Lemaert Heijndricksz	Lemaert Heijndricksz	
7. Laurens Willemisz	Laurens Willemisz	
8. Jacob Jansz Schiedam		
9. Jan Hillebrandsz		
10. Jacob Jansz Hooghwout		
11. Pieter Cornelisz	Pieter Cornelisz	
12. Jacob Jansz Sterrenburgh	Jacob Jansz Sterrenburgh	
13. Jan Reymersz		
14. Jan van Buysen		
15. Jacob Evertsz		
16.		'Van Pummerend' (carpenter) † 8/96
17.		'The sickle' † 24/1/97
18.		Claes Andriesz Goutjck † 21/6/97
19.		Jan Fransz van Haerlem † 5/7/97

Note Table Two

* With Jan Cornelisz Rijp, the winterers returned to Maassluis (west of Rotterdam) on 29 October 1597. In two days they travelled via Delft, The Hague, and Haarlem to Amsterdam. When they arrived in Amsterdam, around noon on 1 November, the news of their return spread through the city. While reporting in at the office of the ship's owner, Pieter Hasselaer, they were called to join a reception at the Prinsenhof and greet the burgomaster and company and the Lord Chancellor of Denmark, ambassador of the Danish King. The Prinsenhof on the Oudezijdsvoorburgwal (No. 195-199) was originally a nunnery, but after the Reformation it became a lodging for 'princes' and, from 1597, also the meeting place of the Amsterdam Admiralty Board. Today it is still a hotel, down the canal from Plancius' parish and opposite the Oude Kerk, where Van Heemskerck lies buried. The reception of the winterers in the Prinsenhof, fox fur hats and all, was

depicted in an engraving in Pontanus' *Rerum et Urbis Amstelodamensium Historia* (1614).

[28 July 1597] We sailed 6 miles [40 km] southeast of St. Laurens Bay or Schans Cape [southern Novaya Zemlya], when we saw two Russian lodyas, which comforted us, although we were careful for reason of their numbers, because we counted at least thirty men, and knew not what sort of persons they were; savages or other un-Dutch. With much effort we got to shore and when they saw us, they left their work and came towards us [...]. Some of them knew us, because they visited our ship the year before when we past through Vaygach [...]. They asked us for our 'korabl', meaning our ship, and we gestured as well as we could that we had lost our ship in the ice; wherewith they said: 'korabl propal', which we understood to be: 'Have you lost your ship?' and we answered: 'Korabl propal' [...]. They expressed their grief for our loss [...], and gestured that they had drunk wine in our ship [two years ago], and asked us what drink we had now. One of our men went back to the scute and drew some water, and let them taste it, but they shook their heads and said 'No dobre', not good [...]. It had been thirteen months since we departed from Jan Cornelisz [at Bear Island] and we had not seen any man, only monsters and ravenous wild bears, so that we were in great comfort to see that we had lived so long to come in the company of man again.

[...]



28 July 1597: "Plate of how we after a long and sad journey encountered two Russian lodyas." Van Heemskerck is recognizable up front on the right, fox-fur hat in left hand.

[20 August 1597] Then we went on land [on the western shore of the White Sea] into the houses that stood upon the shore, where they showed us great friendship. They led us into their rooms and bade us to sit down and cooked us a dish of fish, and made us right welcome. [...] They lived very poorly and ordinarily eat nothing but fish. During the evening, when we prepared ourselves to go back to the sloop,

they prayed the master and me to stay with them in their houses, which the master thanked them for, and he went back to the boat, but I stayed the night. Beside those thirteen Russians, there were two Laplanders and three women with a child, which lived very poorly of the remains given to them by the Russians; a piece of discarded fish or some fish heads. We found it quite disturbing to see that

their poverty was so great that those leftovers were gratefully accepted.

[29 August 1597] [After four days], the Laplander returned [from Kola], without our man, and this troubled us; but he brought us a letter that was written unto our master, which he opened before us. The writer wondered much about our arrival in that place, and that he verily thought that we had lost our lives, but that he was exceedingly glad of our arrival. [...] We wondered quite a bit who it could be that showed us such great favor and friendship, and according to the letter knew us well. Although the letter was signed 'by me Jan Cornelisz. Rijp', we could not perceive that it was the same Jan Cornelisz who the year before had set out with us in the other ship, and left us at Bear Island.

The 2 of September in the morning we rowed up the river and as we passed along we saw trees on the sides, which comforted us and it made us glad to enter a new world, because all the time we were out we had not seen any trees. [...]

With the northwest sun [in the evening] we got to Jan Cornelisz' ship, into which we clambered and had some drinks. There we began to make merry with the seamen and were happy to see each other again. We rowed on and later that night arrived at Kola [Murmansk] where some of us went on land, and some stayed in the boats to look after our goods. To those we sent milk and other things to comfort and refresh them; and we were all exceedingly glad that God of his mercy had delivered us out of so many dangers and troubles.

[11 September 1597] By leave and consent of the boyard, governor to the King of Muscovia, we brought our scute and boat into the merchants' place and left them there as a monument to our long, distant, and never before sailed voyage, made in those open boats along almost 400 German miles [2520 km] of coastline to the town of Kola, wherent the inhabitants thereof could not sufficiently wonder.

These fragments are from '*The True and Perfect description*' were taken from William Philip's 1609 translation, reproduced in Beke (1853 and 1876, available as facsimile edition reprinted by Elibron, n.d.), and compared with a translation of de Veer's original text into modern Dutch by Arjaan van Nimwegen (1978, Spectrum). De Veer's dedication, not included in the 1609 text, has been translated from Van Nimwegen's text. Texts from the 'Itinerario' were adapted from the edition of John Wolfe, London 1598, facsimile edition reprinted by

Johnson (Norwood, New Jersey: 1974). Texts from Van Linschoten's 'Voyage round by the North' were translated from Mollema (1947) and cross-checked with the original text reproduced in L'Honoré-Naber (1914).

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To Be A Man Is Not Easy ~ Dollars In The Wall. Interview With Mr. Babbs Haruna From Nkoranza



You know it is difficult to make money here in Ghana so that's why I decided to go to Libya. Twice I went there and both times I had bad luck and returned empty handed. But as soon as I have enough money I will go for a third time. Until I succeed.

My second attempt to make money in Lybia was in 2003. I learned from my first trip and so I took another route. To Bawku, the border town, and from there with several trucks and vehicles to Agadez, which is a desert town in Niger. That road to Agadez by the way is the worst in West Africa, worse than driving through the desert itself. Humping and bumping through deep potholes in the road, broken vehicles everywhere, mummified cow-skeletons along the road and a burning sun. So, up to Agadez the route was the same as the road I traveled before, but once in Agadez, where you pass straight into desert land, I made a different choice from my first journey. It costs more but it is worth it if you have the money. You wait until there are enough people, 200 in all, and then you are pulled into a large

truck, the type we call 'combine', and that truck brings you right through the desert where there is no road to a village called Durku. That is the last village in the country of Niger, after that you are in Libya.

We were with over 200 people in that lorry, packed like fish standing on their tails. It's a miracle that we did eventually arrive. After Durku there is nothing anymore except sand and stones and you wait. You may wait one week or three weeks if you are lucky but some can spend four months or more over there before they find transport to Libya.

Staying in the village of Durku gives a problem for each day you have to eat, at least something. The water is free for there is a natural water source over there. Everybody is careful with his money because it is needed for the connection car to Libya, cars that are run by Libyans and costs 60,000 CFA per person. That is the amount you pay but you also have to have money at hand to pay for a present for the driver for there are always more people than cars. These connection people make good business. Now if you are not careful and spend too much on food while waiting for your connection and you have not enough to bribe them then you can go back to Ghana and have to start all over again!

I took a connection car and went straight and painlessly to Libya, to the town of Saba. The other border town is called Black, that's where I went the first time when I crossed to Libya, which was in 1997.

Let me tell you about that first time. That time I took the Mount Hogar route, which is less costly but much tougher. It may cost less money but has claimed a lot more lives. That first time I suffered too much before I reached Libya. It took me 12,000 CFA to pay a guide in Agadez and a lesser amount for a car that brings you to the foot of the Hogar Mountain. There you are all dropped in the sand and that is it. The cars return and you are left to yourself. You and your guide climb over the Mount Hogar which is very difficult and if you make it you walk for a week by foot through the sand and you feel thirsty or sometimes you feel nothing, you just walk, only walk. It is a horror. It is important to dodge the official borders so you cross somewhere secretly into Libya. That first time it took me three months to go from Ghana to Black in Libya. Some got sick, some started acting abnormally, some also died.

My best friend, a man from my hometown Nkoranza, died and left me alone. He and I walked together through the desert. One night he slept and the next

morning he did not get up, he was dead. He was my very best friend.

Over there, there is no shade. You walk in the sun and at times you sleep. Always short sleeps. We were with a group of two hundred people and in our case five of them died. I don't know why my friend died. No snakebite, nothing like that. He still had some water and some food. He just died. If someone dies we don't use tools, we have none, we use our hands to push the sand away and we put the person there in the manhole and we close it with sand and put some stones on it.

During the desert crossing the way is indicated by way of second hand tires but some are lost. When in 1997 I arrived in the village Black, in Libya, I was exhausted and had to rest for three months. My friend was dead, I had a fever and my money was finished. I then went to town to look for work and was hired to wash people's clothes. Then I did mason work which is very popular work in Libya. The Egyptians and the Libyans are the contractors, they are the bosses. We Ghanaians mix cement and plaster walls. We get paid per contracted work after completion. Some times we would be hungry while working three months on the construction of an apartment and get pay afterward and be rich. You earn more than in Ghana that is why we do it. We stay in connection houses where Ghanaians live. I stayed long enough in Black to recover and earn money to travel to Tripoli. In Black I saved 150 dollars and I spent 75 dollars to go to Tripoli. So I had some money left and ate better and gained some strength to do the same work in Tripoli. There I saved 1500 dollars. With that money I had enough to pay for the connection to Europe so I paid them. But the connection got busted. They arrested us and the sea-band which was steering the fishing boat to cross us over to Europe was jailed. They threw me in prison, took my money and flew me back to Ghana. I had lost.

Had I decided to cross from Morocco instead of from Libya the chances would also have been equally poor. They arrest you there and maltreat you for six months before they also send you back to Ghana so there is no reason trying the Morocco connection. The Malta connection is good.

In 1999 I returned to Ghana after being in Libya for two years. In Nkoranza I had to tell the parents of my best friend that their son had died. They did not take it easy but were grateful to me for telling them. I told them all the details, as much as I could. Between 1999 and 2003 I lived in Ghana by renting out bicycles but two of the bicycles broke down and the business went bad. How do I live? My

friends sometimes wire me Euros from Spain, the ones that made it. I am also married and had two children before I made my second journey to Libya. My wife is in agreement of course, she knows what it means to always live without money so she said 'please do it, go for us'.

The second time that I decided to go to Libya I went through Durku as I told you. Then from Durku to Saba with a car, no more by foot to Black! Then straight on to Tripoli, where I had spent one year doing the same work as I did before, which is mason work. I was going about my way very successfully when out of nowhere there was an announcement over the radio. Al-Qathafi: 'Out, all you Ghanaians. No more Ghanaians in Libya, out, all of you!'

At once, within a few hours, we had to go to the airport and mostly we had to leave everything behind. We were deported right away, because the Libyans had a problem with the Americans and when they settled their problem they wanted only blacks that are from America in Libya, that's why they wanted us, the Ghanaian blacks, out. But I am not sure if all that was true.

So that was in 2003. I had to run and I could not take my money home with me. So far I had saved 900 dollars. You can never leave money in your pocket let alone in your room. It will disappear. So we have what we call the 'wet-bank'. You wrap your dollars in plastic and stuff them in the back of your bowels where they are safe. You put a lot of cello tape around it or else your money gets wet and falls apart. But I had, this time, saved my money by putting it in a hollow in the wall of a house that I was plastering. I had it safe behind the plaster, in fact it is still safe! The only problem is that I will never see it again! How can you go later to someone's house and say: 'My money is hidden in your wall behind the cement'. You are not even allowed in a Libyan house because blacks are not allowed in Libyan houses.

I put 900 dollars in that wall and lost it for good. But as soon as I have the chance I will go for a third time, and that time I must succeed. Soon you'll see me go again! By the way there's more dollars in those walls than mine alone!

To Be A Man Is Not Easy ~ A Scar Reminds Me Of The Day I Wept.

Interview With Kwame Baffo



Baffo returned to Ghana in 1994 and stayed at first in Accra, the capital, because the financial expectations of his family home in the village of Nkoranza were far too high. Much more was demanded of him, paying this hospital bill, that funeral and those school fees, than he could afford. Even now, after twelve years, his 'been to overseas' status makes him the banker of the family. This happens to all who leave Ghana and then return as 'a rich man'. Baffo now invests his money in building a second house. Should he have put his money in the bank instead he would have spend it all on family matters. Now the cash is simply not there, it has become a wall, a roof, a building. 'Should I tear down the building to pay your child's bill?' Baffo helped a junior brother through university and now his brother is also 'a success' and helps to share the family burden. His brother follows an exchange program in the Netherlands.

This is Baffo's story:

In 1989 I decided to go to Libya. I was a driver in the hospital at Nkoranza but I wanted a better future and my friends who had gone before urged me to join them in Libya where money comes easier as they said. So I did. It took me 26 days to reach there. Niger, two days waiting for transport at the capital, a day and a half in a truck and three days waiting in Agadez for transport through the desert. The desert treks are risky so the cars depart three at the time. Pick-ups, filled with 25 persons each. You think there's really no more place and then another few persons are pressed inside but eventually full is full! Drivers stick together because of desert storms and mishaps, alone may mean lost. We went. You stand there body to body in the back of the pickup and you cannot turn or move. It was so risky that I wanted to come back but there is no way back. You have one gallon water for three days and you put salt in it which helps you to go slow on the water. You drive at night and in the day you wait somewhere in the shade. You reach the Algerian border town which is called Tamanrasset. Here you stay a week to treat yourself from your illnesses, nose bleedings, heatstrokes, malaria,

craziness. If you pay the Ghanaian agent he cooks for you. Then there is another trip for you, five cars in convoy this time. A three day journey.

You go again with your gallon of salted water, now to the Mount Hogar. There you walk, you have to climb the mountain by foot and it is tough and you are weak. The bag you have is too heavy so people throw one by one their luggage away. If you are lucky you reach the mountaintop and you rest. At four in the evening you start walking. You walk for three days through pure sandy desert, again with another gallon of water. You have hired a guide who leads you to the border with Libya. You see so many corpses dead in the sand and everywhere along the road that you want to return, but return, how?! We Nkoranza people are more in number, in my case we were four, so we looked after each other. If one is sick we tell the guide to stop and wait for the Nkoranza friend to recover. If you are alone the guide does not mind you but if four people say stop he will stop. These guides are from Niger and Algeria. They show you the light of the southern city in Libya and then they return and you go alone. If you miss the light that night you have to wait another day till it is night again. Short of water, short of food, no shade but all you can do is walk on.

Nowadays Mount Hoggar passage is no more used because of armed robbers. In my time it was safe, at least from robbers! Once in Libya there is police everywhere because of the border and so you travel at night, secretly. Again two nights through the desert and then you get to the town called Obare. Now here you know you have made it. Border patrols stop here. I took a bus to Saba and went on to Benghazi. Tripoli is not as safe for black Africans as Benghazi because many more Ghanaians are deported from Tripoli, that's what I was told.

I arrived and settled in the 'Nkoranza house' in Benghazi. At that time there were between forty and sixty Ghanaians from Nkoranza living there. This is how it goes. In the morning you wake up and you go to a certain place. You sit there. A car stops and you all rush and jump on that car. The man says: I need two, you and you. So you sit there and run to each car that stops till they pick you up to work. Work in Libya can be okay but mostly you are cheated if you have to work that way. So I worked my way into a company. We cannot trust the Libyans for they do not see us blacks as humans, they see us as work machines. If the machine breaks they throw stones or leave you to die alone. Not all are bad of course. Say after two years you have completed a job and you wait for your pay. They may just chase you away. A Libyan can bring you to a nice farm in the desert

and give you a nice little house to live in. 'Run the farm for me, okay?' The owner goes and comes back a week later with some food and maybe some money.

'Well done, continue, next week!' People are taken prison for there is no way to cross that desert by foot. I heard of one man who had been alone for a year like that! Ghanaian friends were near to that farm in the desert, they were buying a sheep in that region of the country. Suddenly they heard shouting in our own Twi language: 'Come, come!' They went and it was something! That man was so happy, could not have been made happier by anything but the company of real people, his own people, he had not spoken to anybody for over a year. They spent two days together and talked and talked and talked. Ate the sheep! So then they left him and the man knew a little bit more about the outside world. I heard about another friend who was hired like that. He drove with the Libyan to the desert and after many hours they reached sheep, a lot of sheep. The man said: 'I get you a camel and you look after my sheep, herd them, see that they eat and no one gets lost.' Our friend is from Ghana and does not know a camel but he said 'Okay'. He had no bed to lay his head at night, no roof against the sun, a gallon of water, some food and the owner was gone. The owner returned each week to give him medicines, food and water. After six months the Ghanaian escaped through the desert and came to our Nkoranza House in Benghazi. We thought we saw a ghost or a wild animal, dirty, smelling, burned deeply black and wild hair all over him. The man never made it, he became mad and died.

Egyptians are the dirtiest people. Poverty drives them to Libya, Egypt has no oil. They have no manners at all, no dignity. They can shit in public, they stink and what do they do? They may run a farm and bring one of our black boys there to work. The Egyptian sits there with a heap of stones beside him. If the farmer gets tired and slows down he throws a stone, then another one.

Libya is not a good country apart from the money you can earn. Their women are worse off. Once they marry they are never allowed outside the house not even for shopping. From a slim girl you see them become fat and sloppy within a year from doing nothing and being bored. After puberty they are always escorted and if we blacks even look at them the Libyan boys throw stones at us. They go with a police escort to their schools and no one can come near, not even the Libyans. When they reach the age of 18 the father plants a flag on the house. Here lives a marriageable woman. Two flags, two women. When after 25 they are not married the flag is taken down and their lives are over. Then the woman spends the rest of

her life just being there, a life sentence for being an unmarried woman! No husband, no sex, no child, no outings, nothing.

Our women who go to Libya become prostitutes. They are owned by a Ghanaian man and together they share the income. As even black women are not allowed to cross the streets at night the Ghana prostitutes are dressed like boys, a cap, a jackets, pants, a cigarette, that is how they are escorted by their men to certain houses where Egyptians or Ghanaians or Malians live (very seldom a Libyan man) and brought to a room and used by ten to twenty men one after another. Then they go home in the morning and count how much they got.

I was lucky. I made it so that I worked at a British oil company. They were new in Libya, not yet registered, and so they paid me in local currency instead of in dollars. They wanted me. After they received their registration as a company they said to me: 'Go back to Ghana and get an official visa and come back to work for us so we will pay you in dollars'. That's what I planned to do after two years, to go back to Ghana to make my stay in Libya official, but when I was on my way to the airport I was robbed of all I had, everything. The taxi-drivers! They all know who goes back to Ghana with money! The taxi that drove me diverted me and then robbed me and left me on the road. I waited. I did not weep. I wept only once in my life, which was during my time in Libya.

The rumor went in Benghazi that police would raid our Nkoranza house and arrest us. So every night we slept dressed and ready to run, shoes on top of our chests, that's how we slept. Then after seven nights no one came and we relaxed a bit. Then one week later they came at night. We were forty or so. We fled all possible ways and they only caught one of us. I ran into a forest and my back was injured by a branch. I did not notice it till we all returned from different hideouts and came back to the house. I felt my back and saw that my hand was covered with blood. Blood, dark red blood. When I saw the blood on my hand I wept. Till now I carry that large scar on my back to remind me of the day I wept.

Anyway I was robbed and my Ghanaian friends took care of me and they nursed me back and then they brought me to my company and explained what happened and I worked there another year to earn money for the journey back to Ghana. This time by plane and I transferred my money by bank.

Once in Ghana, just at that moment, there were sanctions and suddenly no more

Ghanaians were allowed into Libya! It was my bad luck! Stuck in Ghana. But I decided to get a visa to Europe instead for I did not have enough money to build up a life in Ghana. It was going to be Czechoslovakia instead of Libya. I paid a local connection man here in Nkoranza and he got me a visa for a trade fair in Prague and I went. We were two men together from Ghana, we planned to go from Prague to Austria because I knew people there. I called Austria but the man said 'No, I cannot come for only two persons'! He said: 'Go to the university in Prague instead and you will find black people there. They will help you.'

The first thing you do in Europe when you have nobody and you are stranded is sleep at a train station. I did that for some days. If you don't meet a black man at the train station then you ask for black disco. That's where blacks come and if you are lucky they will bring you home. At their home for a price they will help you further.

We went to the university, were lucky to meet a black man from Zaire and we stayed at his house. We stayed for one month so this black man also extended our visa. He collected 300 dollar each from us. We should pay another 200 dollars and he would take us to Germany. We had no money so I called my uncle in Hamburg for money. It worked. The connection man from Zaire gave us each a Benin passport. He said we should learn in one hour our own name, the name of the president of Benin, the flag, the capital of Benin, and how to sign the signatory on the passport. And what money they use in Benin. At that time with a Benin passport you didn't need a visa for Germany. It was very cold when we crossed the German border and that was our luck! The custom man stayed in his warm office and stamped our passports unseen. This was our second attempt to cross to Germany, the first one failed and we were sent back to Czechoslovakia.

Winter 1992, we were in a car with our man from Zaire driving to Hamburg. The Zairian took our Benin passports back to Prague and never gave us our Ghanaian passports back because of security checks. So we had no passports. Long drive, over 24 hours to Hamburg. My uncle met us at the train station and the Zairian returned home. Once in Germany we could not stay unless we would seek political asylum so we say we are both wanted in Ghana and it is not safe for us to return. I filed at the detention place but there were 500 people in line before me and it was only the next day that they took my credentials and transferred me to a house for asylum-seekers. A line of people of all nations, Philipinos, Chinese, blacks from all over Africa, a long line, and every day more people, I was amazed. After a

month they transferred me to Heidelberg and they gave me a bed and food, 260 Marks per month. Then you get an ID card and seek work. They don't speak English in Germany so you need to learn five sentences: 'Good Morning', 'How are you', 'Where is the boss', 'Can you give me a job', 'Thank You Sir'. After two months I had a job, baking bread, it was a nice job for the people were nice to me. I worked every night in the bakery and overtime too. But they still worried me for I had to come to court and when they said 'No, you can't stay here' I had to make an appeal. While the lawyer is fighting for you, you just work. After a year at the bakery the lawyer said that all was refused but he was going to make another appeal.

One morning I come home to my rented room and from the hall I see a police car. I suspect that they come for me and go into my room and lock it. Then I open the window and climb out and into the window of other people. They were from Zaire. They did not see me and I slide under their bed. The police searched everywhere and also came into the room of the Zairians. Police said they were looking for Mr. Baffo, they mentioned my name but the Zairians said 'no, we have not seen him for three days' and then they left and I crawled from under their bed. They gasped! I heard that my workplace too had been told that I was wanted. With the Zairians we were still discussing how I could run away and then the police car returned to our building. They went to my room straight, I heard them, they now went for the other Ghanaian who lived with me, his name is Adyei. He was there for he could not be warned and they arrested him and sent him to Ghana. I heard it all. Later I ran to my worksite and asked for my pay saying that they are after me. They pay on certain days only but I was lucky that the bakers woman was good enough to hide me there for 5 days till they gave me my pay. Then I had all I wanted. I went to my room to pack my things and hide but the police were there! You know why? The woman who lived down from us was spying on all of us and informed the police that I was around! Police arrested me with handcuffs. Court. The judge asked why did I not leave Germany on the date given. I said because the lawyer made an appeal. They said if we send you to Ghana now what will you do? I said nothing. My lawyer told me he was still fighting. They sent me to another center but I was down and lost interest. I started to think. My mind counted my money and my prospects and said to me: 'Better go home now'. I had already bought a minibus from my overtime money which I had shipped to Ghana and I had saved some money. 1000 dollars and 6900 German Marks. I decided to stop this thing and go home to Ghana. I was not all that sad for I now had money

to make a life in Ghana though I wanted more. Two policemen came to sit at my side on Swissair and I went back to Ghana like that, like a thief. In 1994 I was flown back to Ghana. That is my story!

From my savings I built a house. It is the house I now live in. The bus eventually collapsed because it was already second hand to begin with. I have a wife and two girls, 10 and 6, and I moved back to Nkoranza where life is easier than in the big city of Accra. I have a good life, despite the fact that my family comes to knock at my door day and night. I say please I have no money but to your family you can't say you have no money when there is a sick one or a coffin to be bought. You have to do it. Other times you should not do it. It hardens a bit to say no, but much of the time it is 'no'.

Do it again? No, never! If someone wants to go I advise him against it. It is too risky and people die on the way. Everybody regrets but halfway you cannot turn back and sometimes when you come back to Ghana you only tell the good part. People here in Nkoranza see those who were lucky and return with money to build a house so they say 'why would I not also go?'

Nkoranza is the most important Libya-connection town in Ghana. Long ago two people went to Libya and came back to Nkoranza with tractors. That story went around the whole country and so Nkoranza became the centre for travel to Libya. There are people here who do passports, yellow fever, connection for travel, money transfers, all can be done here. People come from everywhere and wait till they have a chance to go to Libya.

To Europe too, I would never go again. It is tough. You work hard and have no other life than work and being chased. At times in Germany we had the skinheads who would aim at blacks and gang on us, knife us to kill, things like that.

Other blacks give Africans the bad name. Gambian people in our flat in Germany were bad news, they sold cocaine, openly even. One night we saw people knocking on our door and they had masks. We were very afraid. We thought they were skinheads. But they were policemen and came with guns and they searched the whole building and made pictures of everyone. They found cocaine in between the panels of the doors of the Gambians. The dogs sniffed it out. We never saw those Gambians again, arrested, in jail. But we Africans get a bad reputation because of those Gambian drug dealers.

In Libya they throw stones at you and spit at you, cheat you and let you work like a slave. All bad things you can imagine happen in Libya! No, I do not advise anyone to go either to Libya or to Europe. Not now, there is no work now in Europe and there is work in Ghana. Somewhat better, Ghana. Many people who have suffered so much from these journeys have mental problems. You see them here in Nkoranza too, they were unlucky and never recovered from the shame. They got mad.

To Be A Man Is Not Easy ~ My Hotel! Interview With Michael Sarpong



Should I start with my name? My name is Michael Sarpong, a citizen of Nkoranza. I stayed in Ghana for a number of years and I want to tell you my own story of why and how I got overseas. My wife had a health problem and she decided to go to the US for medical treatment. That was in 1987. She applied for a visa which was issued for two years and she left soon thereafter. During her stay, which was at the time that Reagan was president of the United States, she, together with many other foreigners, was granted amnesty and received a residence permit, because she had stayed for a certain number of years. My wife was lucky being there at that time and she began processing her papers towards permanent residence in the US. She called me over the telephone one day and told me about this and asked if I wanted to join her. I said all right.

At that time when I talked about my plans, people said: 'No, don't do that! Nkoranza is a village!' 'There is no light, no water, nothing in Nkoranza'. 'There is no road to Nkoranza, too!'. People told me to reconsider and build my hotel in any town but not in that small village of Nkoranza. But I said 'No, you wait and see'. And look at it now! Now there is electricity, now there is a tarred road, and

now many people visit Nkoranza and the hotel is always full.

I believe in my goal and I have been right when I said: 'Very soon things will change.' Things changed! As a marketing man I am not short sighted. I plan for the far future and I must see how things are in a few or many years from now. That is my field: planning and concentrating on succeeding.

So even when I acquired the land people did not like it because it was too near to the cemetery. So what I did was this: I looked around and saw a good piece of land nearby. It belonged to the Presbyterian Church but it was not used. I said: 'That is the right piece of land which I need for my hotel!' I saw that the church had not made any lease and did not use the land and so I put sand and blocks on it. One day they saw that someone was building on their land. I got a letter from the District Council summoning me to come and so I came. I asked 'What do you need me for'. They said the committee of the church had reported me to the Council for taking their plot. So we all met and sat down and then during that time the DS was a woman, Dora Adyei. And I presented my case to her, while the people too presented their case. She said to us: 'Oh but this is a good plan, this is good for the town! The town is developing and we have a lot of visitors and always we have to send them to Techiman so stay overnight. So when you, Michael, have decided to build a hotel here it is a good thing for the town and we should encourage you! People build houses for themselves and you are going to build a hotel which serves not just yourself but the whole town, so I decide to give the plot to you!' She then asked the other people to present their lease and their side-plan and all the papers and they had none. Dora said: 'Okay, this guy has a good project for the town so I am going to divide the plot into two, one is for the hotel and the other is for the Presbyterian Church. Half for you, the other half for you.'

So I started. I was again lucky for this was the time that they brought electricity to Nkoranza and started to improve the roads. I decided to hire the grader and level my land, that's why now the lawn is so beautiful! So that is how 'Mikesap' came into being. It is named after me: Michael Sarpong!

So I joined my wife in Washington and earned more money for my project and also gained more experience in hotel management over there in the USA. In 1990 I went to the States while in the meantime I continued working on my project, for that was my purpose in life, to run my own hotel!

I worked in all kind of different hotels in Washington so as to get as much experience in my field as I could gather. I worked in the Embassy Suite, the Marriott, the Holiday Inn, the Best Western, many of them! I gathered hotel-experience. I worked in housekeeping. I worked in the laundry. I worked at the front desk. I worked as a bellman. I also worked in a restaurant as a chef so, really, I was able to gain experience in almost all of the aspects of managing a hotel. Then I stopped working in hotels and went back to school to learn something about computers because the world is changing.

So now while I'm here in Ghana I put all my accounts on the computer in order to easily check it overseas. Up until now things were different and it was not easy to supervise my hotel and the money from such a distance. People write things in a file and all kind of things can happen to that file includingly being burned! That's why I applied myself to learn computer science, to keep my accounts correct.

Then I decided to work a little more for the sake of gathering money towards my hotel and in a few years my wife and I will return to Ghana to enjoy life here in my home town. So that is the short story I wanted to tell you.

The hotel is a dream of my youth and now it is not only realized but extended with a conference hall and more rooms. I know why I chose my hotel as my purpose in life. At that time I was traveling a lot. I was the sales and marketing manager of the pharmaceutical company in Kumasi so day and night I had to be on the road. My experience led me to see that there was an excellent opportunity in the hotel business. I saw that there were some towns with nowhere to sleep. At times I had to sleep in my car. I realized then that in Nkoranza too there was no hotel and people slept at the lorry station or anywhere at all, in big lorries during the night. Yes there was the need for a hotel in Nkoranza. I am in marketing and I see that there is a good market here and so I decided to start my project.

Had I been a pharmacist then I would have gone into research or in the hospital-field but since I did marketing I saw that hotel business is where the market is. I had long made up my mind to make my future independently and not to spend my life as a working man for someone else.

So when I saw this hole in the market I immediately started investing in my own hotel here. I studied marketing here in Ghana at the University of Kumasi, after attending secondary school. I needed money to further my education at the

university and since I was not all that rich I had to work for it. That was why I came to Nkoranza, my home town, and worked at Nkoranza Hospital. I met you and Dr. Konthuruthy there. At that time you were a young girl with long hair. Very young, maybe straight from medical school, and you were so quick in doing all kinds of operations and you didn't eat! You drank a beer and came back to see the patients and we all loved you! You came in 1973 and you left three months later. I left in 1975 to Kumasi. When you returned to Nkoranza in '83 I was still in Kumasi as the marketing man for this large pharmacy. I worked with them from '76 all the way to '90. My wife had already gone. She is now a US citizen and I am too. We are dual citizens. I've got a lot at stake in the US. I have two houses. That is because I saw that the housing business is good! At first we stayed in a mixed neighborhood but it was very unpleasant, Africans made the place very noisy, so we decided to move to a better place and I bought a townhouse in a good neighborhood. Its equity has gone up since I bought it. So from the equity I bought a second house. My son is now going to university and my plan is that I will sell the town house and give the other house to my son. From the revenue of the townhouse I can invest in my business in Nkoranza here.

My wife and I are ready to come back to Ghana because we are reaching an age when we should slow down and enjoy our own town. We are in our fifties getting towards sixty and we have built up some pension funds which we can use to retire here. It won't be too much of the relaxing type! Since we have put much in the hotel we have to come home and invest more time in it. So it is not exactly retiring but here in Ghana we will enjoy life better, life is slower and sweeter. Of course I can go many times for a vacation to the US, I will have to do that. I have a lot of contact with the Ghanaian people in Washington who also one time or another want to return home. They don't have a reliable person to invest in Ghana for them. If I return here they can trust me to handle their affairs for them. Some want to build their own house and that sort of thing and they know I can do it. So that will be another business enterprise in a way. Nkoranza people, Kumasi people, Accra people, they all approach me to build for them here in Ghana. So I will have enough to do when I come home.

It is hard when you are old, sixty or more, to keep up the American pace. Here you can come home and do business and relax at the same time for it is home. So roughly in five or six years we will be home, enjoying, going around my business and relaxing. By that time the extension of the hotel will be completed, we'll have

the 18 rooms and the conference hall on the second floor. It will be gorgeous.

It is important too keep it neat and gorgeous. That is why I have worked all these jobs in the hotels in Washington. Hotel business means cleanliness. If somebody comes to a hotel room and sees something dirty, that person won't come there again. The rooms, the bed sheets, the bathroom, all of it needs to be clean. I bring everything from the US. When I see that the bed sheets get old or the color is fading I give them away and replace them straight from the US. The rooms, the bath, the floor, I look at everything. I replace the shower curtains every time I come to Ghana. I buy all these things, the detergents, soap and spray, all, from the US.

When you get into a room in my hotel you see that it smells lovely and it looks good. All the time I dedicate them to keep the place clean, both outside and inside. So when I came this time we started painting the summer hut because, you know, that is the first appearance of the hotel business. If somebody comes and sees the cheerful appearance at first sight that person may develop an interest to come here and stay here always. You know last year I met a lady, a lawyer from Kintampo, who came to my hotel for lunch. She said: 'Oh this place is very neat. How much a room?' 'Can I go and look there?' 'Yes of course.' So they opened a room for her and she said: 'How beautiful! I am not going to Kintampo, I will stay here!' So the lady stayed here and said: 'This is my home, I will come and stay here each time I am around!' So she does.

So this is my priority and I am trying to get it through to the staff that maintenance is of key importance, inside out. It is not easy because I am away for a year but every day I talk with them, I call them daily on the phone. Also I ask people in town to go there and see what is happening, so they go there and report to me: this needs to be painted and that broke down and so on. And I call my people and tell them to accordingly. I had a problem with my hotel manager but now I interviewed a new person who is going to take charge as the next manager and I will be in touch with him each day till next year when I return. I used to come every other year but now I come one month during each year. I will lose two weeks pay in the States but I will come for it is important. I need to do the supervision here very well and I can see to the construction of the new wing. I may lose some pay but the loss will pay itself back.

My son too is closely connected to Ghana. Last year he started an internet café in

Accra and he does it very well. As a student he has put all these machines together and made something out of it! So it seems he is also an industrious man, like his father. Maybe he is planning for his future. Ghana is a quiet country where you can live comfortably when you concentrate on doing your business well. It is good here, no troubles, it is safe, the weather, the environment, everything 'it is pleasant'.

We can do it, we Ghanaians, but it is hard work and you need to be serious. That is what made America rich, the small businesses like mine. Here too, that is what I tell people, we can do that here as well as in America. You start a small business and you employ some people. You help these people because at the end of the month they take something home as pay. And there is a variety of opportunities, internet, a restaurant, Mexican food, Chinese rice, there is so much, you can create something for yourself! If only you are serious and keep to your goal then you will succeed.

That's what I keep saying. People don't want to invest with the little resources they have. They don't want to do something. They all want to build their own house and what do you get from a house? Nothing! At least you can invest in something that creates capital for yourself. A house creates no revenue. But my hotel does for every day I get revenue from it and it is an asset for me too, you see.

My mother is here in Nkoranza and is happy. She does not demand anything except transportation to go to the hospital if she needs her check up! You know why, because I look after her. Every month she gets something and so my mother is content. She lives in the village of Dotobaa. My father passed away some time ago. Next week I will go to the funeral of my mother in law and then we will return to the States. My wife is arriving in Accra today. We will be attending her mother's funeral together and then return to the States.

I am changing the restaurant and brought a lot of glasses and cutlery from the States. You know I am teaching them, before I return to the States, for they don't know how to set the table. They misplace stuff, I need to tell them where to put napkins and they need pepper and salt sets on the table. Next week I will buy those things in Kumasi. You will see that the restaurant will change! And next year I will employ a lady who has an advanced degree in catering and she will introduce a lot of new dishes to our customers.

I am always investing; that's how I am, I enjoy it. Whatever I do I use money to invest in the next opportunity and at the same time earn a revenue. That's what I do, invest in projects. How shall I explain that! It is called being an entrepreneur. I get a loan from America. I compare interest rates and I choose the US and I use that loan to keep investing.

Last year I got an award. My hotel got an award! They called it budget before, but now the hotel is a one star hotel. After two or three years, when finishing the building, I will go for the two stars. And so on. That is my goal. I will get another award, for my place is clean! There are so many people who are customers and always return because they love my place. Many are professionals, doctors and agriculturists and so on. That's why I want this conference room, people ask for space for seminars. There is no such place in Nkoranza and people have to go as far away as Sunyani or Kumasi. They will love my place when it is ready, be sure of that! I will make my dream come true!

From the beginning I say to people you must have a goal! Even with everything I do or wherever I go I keep my goal in mind. For example I was in a store in Washington and saw a solar light and I thought: that is for my hotel and I bought it! Now it is here in the garden. I brought it with me when I came. People admire it and ask 'what is that?' So next time when I come I will bring a lot of them and make it more beautiful all the time. Light in town, no light in town, here in our hotel garden we will have our own solar garden lights where we can enjoy relaxing and drinking our beer! So by just keeping my goal in mind I am succeeding.

To Be A Man Is Not Easy ~ The Boys Of The Band. Nkoranza (Name Changed). Interview With

Akosua Asantewaah



She's called Akosua Asantewaah, a solid, good-humored woman of about forty years old. Some time ago her husband took his colleagues, all civil servants, as well as his own family by surprise by going to Accra for shopping and ... calling his wife the next morning from New York! Her husband Dominique has worked as an accounting assistant for over fifteen years. He is known and well liked in town. His wife kept silent but rumors were quickly spreading that he had indeed left Ghana. 'He went to New York, with the people from the band!' people whispered to each other and congratulated him on his luck.

Akosua Asantewaah, stout earthly and always where her business is, has three children and sells second hand clothes on the street. I ask her about the rumors and this is what she tells me: Oh yes, he left! How long ago? I don't know exactly, it will be a year or more ago already. It was no surprise to me, I knew that he was planning something with his friends, but of course he never told me in so many words. I felt it however and I was proud of him when he called me from New York that morning and when he said: 'I'm here, I'm in America!' I called my children together and told them: your father is a hero, he has made it to America! They danced! We made fufu that day which you know is the food we like the best and we had a party. The neighbors came. I won't forget that day!

He whispered over the phone as if somebody could still overhear him and send him back! Beforehand, yes, he told me that he wanted to go away to earn money for us, but no details. I didn't ask him. Then when he called from New York I knew he had made it. He sounded so happy. But I asked him 'Why did you not greet me before you left?' He laughed and I laughed too. Of course he had to seize the opportunity and go at once so there was no chance for saying good bye. He has a very good friend, a musician. Often this friend gives concerts overseas. One time when things were really hot my husband did something very good for him and his friend said: 'One day I'll pay you back, I'll help you.' So I knew that he was waiting for help to get out of Ghana.

When this musician was invited to perform in New York he took Dominique with

him as one of the band members. No problem with the visa at all. When they all left for the plane my husband joined and it all went smooth, he said. That's how he came to New York!

Now I am alone with my children but people always stop to greet me and it seems they are proud of us, so I am happy. We just pray every day that he may reach his goal and try not to worry too much. Or drink too much! We all pray that one day he comes back safely. And rich of course! I am more worried for him than for myself and my kids. He does not have it very easy. But he calls me as often as he can. Almost every week and when the children were sick he called every day.

He works at a hospital somewhere in New York. He lives in The Bronx if I remember well. It is a rough area but Dominique is not afraid for he too is black like all of them there. There are three Ghanaians together living in one room. Two work and the other one sleeps. They take turns. He already has a white friend who invited him over for Christmas, so he is not very lonely. They alternate working, cooking, sleeping. He has no papers and works under someone else's name. But now, or soon, he will have his own papers processed so things will go better. He may study and get a better job. In fact I think he got his papers now, because he is there over a year. It costs 2000 dollars to get them. He used to work with the name and picture of another Ghanaian but now with 2000 dollar he has received his own working papers.

I? I stay the same! I sell my clothes as I used to and pay chop-money and rent and clothes for the children, these things. My husband used to pay the school-fees and now too he has sent three times 300 dollars which covers the school-fees. So in fact not much has changed. But I think with the papers he can work under his own name and earn more.

The Ghanaians live together in a house and we look after each other in every way possible. He is not alone. He can even go worship in our own language in The Bronx!

There are blacks there like in Ghana here and we Africans do not look strange to them. It is easier to stay in New York than say in Germany or in Europe.

I think a lot of him. Every day I think a lot. Sometimes I wish I could see him, I long for him. I always pray that things go well. If I am faithful and don't think of anything but him then all will be well. The kids however ask every day: when is

papa coming home!

Yes the kids miss him and I am thinking of him but I pray. The danger is to take a lover and I don't think he or I will do that. I care for him a lot and I know he does this for us and cares for us. Now with his papers he will come home and everybody will be happy and the children will all ask: 'papa what will you bring me, what did you buy for me'?

I have a good relationship with his mother, my mother in law, so when he returns there will be harmony. She wants money. All children have to look after their mother. I have a good relationship with her and anytime he sends money I tell her and give her what I can. So we will not quarrel.

I can advise other women in my position for I know how it is! Some take a lover, some only want money, some insult their husbands because they don't send enough money. It does not befit to insult your husband. Me, I pray every day for him. That is better. That is my advice. If you take another lover your husband never will help you again. If you are not free and easy with all the family then there is going to be quarrels too. Always.

Telephone conversation between author and Dominique:

'Upon arrival here I went to the house of a boy from Nkoranza and lived there and used his papers to work. However after 4 months he left and evicted me from the room and I had no more papers to use to work. Then I knew another Nkoranza boy and stayed with him till now. At the end of the month he too is leaving and wants his papers back. Then I don't know what to do. When I live with a guy I pay for the rent and pay for using the work-permit so there is not much left. I could not save anything. I hope at the end of the month to find another person that will take me in so I can continue to work. There used to be a general amnesty for us but they stopped that. Maybe there will come a time that they will start it again. I keep hoping. What people do is marry someone, not a real marriage but for the papers. You usually pay a thousand dollars and sometimes you get cheated. After you pay the person may disappear. Anyway I have not decided to even try that yet.'

Second call week later:

'Maame, yes, it is 8 here and we are preparing for church, a large Pentecostal church and all who worship there are Ghanaians, about 400 of us, not counting

the children. Yes and the preacher is also Ghanaian and there are no black Americans or whites just us. The relationship with the American blacks is okay, it is cordial but we do not know what they are saying. Sometimes they are saying something like 'hey man', and we always lose track of what they want to say, but we are cordial. Of course they are also pretty rough! One night I came home from my shift and a black man was standing there and looking at me angrily and said 'Hey, what are you looking at me for, man, are you looking at me, you fucking son of a bitch, what are you glaring at me for!' He was going to chase me and I looked away and said I am not looking at you and reached my house in time. He laughed. Did you find another room? Not yet, but I'm leaving for church now!'

After almost six months I went to greet the wife and asked her how she, the children and her husband are faring. Apologized for the long delay!

' He is all right. Still the same. Same. I don't know what happens to him. But he still calls often and I still miss him a lot. Same address yes!'

She is short.

Three months later, I tried to call him but the telephone seems dead. Then two weeks later I call again.

'What the fuck are you calling me for! Fuck you man. Fucking shit why don't you leave me alone. I am trying to sleep, lady!'

I hang up. It wasn't him.

Now what?