
Georg Eberhard Rumpf (1627-1702) joined the VOC after a peripatetic military career, and in 1652 sailed to the Dutch East Indies, where he spent the rest of his life. In Ambon, or Amboina, a small island northeast of Java, he was attracted by the strange creatures in this exotic island and he began studying natural history, collecting specimens and writing about them. There he produced most of his voluminous writings.

Rumpf's major work was an illustrated herbal that described about 1,200 plants found in Ambon and the nearby areas. *The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet*, however, focuses not on plants but on crustaceans, shells, minerals and other items that are grouped into three categories: "Soft Shellfish," "Hard Shellfish," and "Minerals, Stones, and Other Rare Things." Each of the volume's 170 chapters examines one or more natural objects. The text also contains rich ethnographic records of the maritime world of Southeast Asia. Rumpf drew heavily on the indigenous lore of the natural world and frequently cited information collected from Chinese traders and immigrants.

[Sicong Zhu]

Book reviews referred to:


