



GENERALE MISSIVE

Nuusbrief van die Stigting VOC 4/21
Newsletter of the VOC Foundation

Die Stigting VOC het op 16 September 1995 tot stand gekom met Bewaring, Opvoeding en Kultuurtoerisme as doel. Dit is as sulks geregistreer by Stad Kaapstad, EWK en SAEHA en is die wettige eienaar van die historiese VOC-handelsmerk in Suid-Afrika. The VOC Foundation was established on 16 September 1995 with Conservation, Education and Cultural Tourism as its aims. It is registered with the City of Cape Town, HWC and SAHRA and is the legal owner of the historic VOC trade mark in South Africa. **Internet:** www.kaap-voc.org. **E-pos/E-mail:** vocinfo@voc-kaap.org **Skakel/Contact:** Sekr./ Secr.: mnr R. Rode, 071-622-5792, e-pos: rodech@icloud.com . **Finansies /Finance:** mnr C. Wessel, tel: 082-377-1682. **Bank:** Nedbank, Somerset-Wes. Rek.no. 1145512305. Rek. naam: 'Stigting VOC Foundation.'

Welaen vrunden!

Van die Komitee

Verskeie nuwe lede het vanjaar by ons Stigting aangesluit; almal word hartlik verwelkom en aangemoedig om aan ons werksaamhede deel te neem en ook aktief by te dra tot wat ons doen.

By die sluitingsgeleentheid op 1 Desember het ons afskeid geneem van ons voorsitter Prof. Leon Hattingh, wat Bloemfontein toe verhuis. Leon was sestien jaar lank voorsitter van die Stigting, en die lys van projekte en uitstappies op ons webwerf wys wat alles gedurende sy voorsitterskap suksesvol onderneem en bereik is. Die komitee het lid Alex Giardini gekies om as voorsitter waar te neem totdat die nuwe voorsitter by die Algemene Jaarvergadering in Maart 2022 gekies word. Ons benodig dringend een of twee nuwe komiteelede; die werk is hoofsaaklik konsulerend van aard en ons kommunikeer per e-pos.

Die Amerikaanse maatskappy Amazon het die toestemming en samewerking van die Kaapstadse Stadsraad gekry om hul Suid-Afrikaanse hoofkwartier te bou op die onontwikkelde driehoek tussen die aansluiting van die Liesbeeck- en Swartriviere, ten spyte daarvan dat Erfenis Wes-Kaap tevore die terrein verklaar het as 'n bewaringsgebied van omgewings- en historiese belang. Hoe raak dit Stigting VOC? Dit is waar vryburgers in 1657 grond begin bewerk het en die buitepos Ruiterswacht in 1659 gebou is. Verskeie bewaringsgroepe met uiteenlopende oogmerke het saamgespan om die ontwikkeling van die terrein deur 'n hofbevel te stop. Stigting VOC kan hom nie vereenselwig met die groep se (meestal mitiese) 'geskiedenis' van die betrokke terrein nie, maar ondersteun die bewaring van die groen driehoek om historiese en omgewingsbewarings redes, en het 'n bydrae van R5000 gemaak tot 'n fonds om die hofkoste te help betaal.

Die vyfde en laaste komiteevergadering van die jaar is op 4 Desember gehou, by waarnemende voorsitter Alex Giardini se huis. Onder die besprekingspunte op die Agenda was lid Jaco du Plessis se voorstel om aanstaande jaar 'n interaktiewe elektroniese kaart saam te stel van VOC- verwante plekke in Suidelike-Afrika, soos geboue in Kaapstad, drostdye, skeepswrakke, batterye, seinkanonne en 57 buiteposte. Die moontlikheid, indien ons vrylik mag vergader, beweeg en reis, van verskeie lesings, uitstappies en 'n bustoer na die Agulhas-streek in 2022 is ook bespreek.

Die Algemene Jaarvergadering vind op Saterdag, 19 Maart 2022 by SASNEV in Pinelands plaas. Teken asseblief die datum aan en probeer om daaraan deel te neem. Bydraes tot ons *Generale Missive* is altyd welkom; die vier kwartaallikse uitgawes verskyn aanstaande jaar op 26 Maart, 18 Junie, 27 Augustus en 6 Desember.

Komiteelid Karen Jennings wat ons oorsese korrespondensie behartig, het met die Australiese VOC-studiegroep kontak gemaak, en 'n aantal van hulle nuusbriewe ontvang. Hierdie nuusbriewe sal binnekort op ons webwerf te lees wees. Ons is ook in gereelde kontak met VOC Kamer Antwerpen, van wie ons nuus en foto's van interessante VOC-gebeure uit België en Nederland ontvang. Karen keer in Desember terug uit Brasilië. Intussen het haar uitstekende roman *The Island* die langlys van die Britse Booker Prys gehaal én die SA Literary Award vir Fiksie gewen. Welgedaan!

Ons herinner ook lede aan die groeiende versameling VOC-boeke by SASNEV se biblioteek in Pinelands. Dit is die plek om kennis oor ons gunsteling onderwerp in sy wye, rare en interessante verskeidenheid op te doen.

Afsluitingsfunksie, 2021



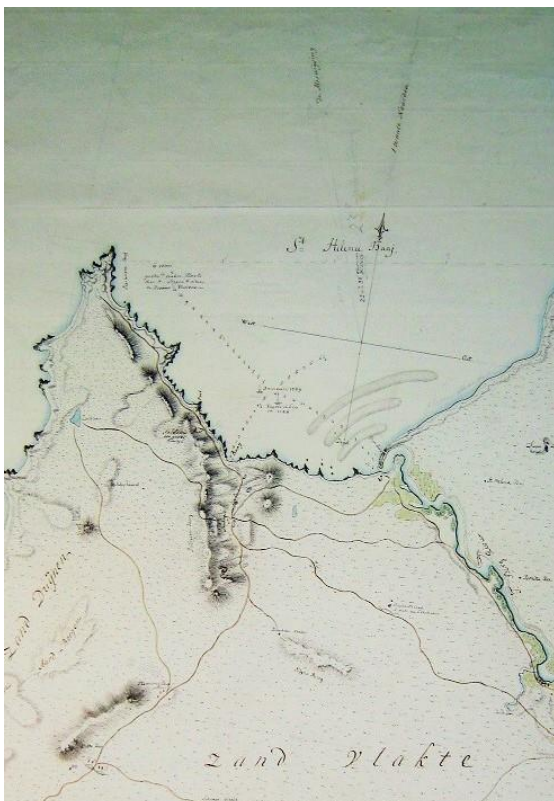


Foto's: Alex Giardini, Jean Sleigh, Rudolf Rode.

Ons jaarlikse afsluitingsete is op 1 Desember by die Cassia Restaurant op die Vissershokpad in die Tygerbergheuwels gehou. Vyftien lede en gades was by die gesellige ete teenwoordig. Die gewone heildronk 'Huis van Oranje!' is gedrink. (Die Kompanjie het omtrent dertig voorgeskrewe heildronke by amptelike funksies gebruik, waaronder 'Seilende en drijvende kielen!' en 'Vaderlands welvaren!') Voor die ete is die nuwe Afrikaanse inligtingsbord by die Nitida Kanonstelling onthul en besigtig. Die inligtingsbord is die enigste van sy soort in die land en is opgerig met geldelike hulp van die Van Ewijk Stigting. Ons Stigting se logo en webadres verskyn ook daarop – dit wys ons betrokkenheid en is goeie reklame vir ons. Drie skote is met 'n VOC voorlaaierkanon afgevuur en 'n bottel sjampanje is in die soldatestyl met 'n sabel onthoof.

Dankie aan almal wat tot hierdie *Generale Missive* bygedra het. Let asseblief op bostaande publikasiedatums vir u gereelde en gewaardeerde bydraes in 2022. Ons is nou drietalig; dit is (moontlik) 'n sigbare aspek van ons opvoedkundige taak.

Gouden Buijs, 1693



Gouden Buijs was 'n nuwe retoerskip van Kamer Enkhuisen wat op sy eerste heenvaart in 1693 nie verder as St Helenabaai (omtrent 150 km van Tafelbaai) kon vorder nie, omdat sy bemanning uitgesterf het. Net twee oorlewendes het die Kaap bereik; een is deur inboorlinge tot by die buitepos Saldanhabaai gebring, die ander het die reddingsspan op die strand ontmoet. 'n Aantal dooies is van die skip gehaal en in die duine begrawe. Nadat die sewentien kiste silwer van die skip gelaai is, het die skip gestrand. Geheel vreemd is dat daar geen inligting oor die stranding in die Resolusies van die Politieke Raad van 1693 nie. Dr AJ Boeseken, redakteur van die derde deel van die gepubliseerde resolusies het al in 1961 opgemerk dat die resolusies uit die tyd van die twee goewerneurs Van der Stel onvolledig is; ook hulle Dagregisters was nie volledig bygehou nie. Sy kon geen verklaring daarvoor vind nie.¹ Die amptelike verslag van die ramp en joernaal van een oorlewende is in 1995 heruitgegee as M. van Gessel en A. Kieskamp (reds.): *Ongelukkig of droevigh verhaal van 't schip de Gouden Buys, 1695*. Amsterdam, 1995.

St Helenabaai is 'n groot baai met 'n kaap (Kaap St Martinus) op sy suidwestelike hoek, en die plek waar die wrak gelê het is onbekend. Nederlandse maritieme argeoloë wat daarna kom soek het, het oor 'n afstand van 40 km drie proewe onderneem, om vas te stel of daar metaal voorwerpe onder die sand was. Ons het onlangs verneem dat 'n gesin op 'n plaas noord van Dwarskersbos glo dat die stranding destyds naby 'n riviermond op hul strook van die kus was. Ons lid, Prof. Wium van Zyl wat Van Gessel en Kieskamp se teks vertaal het, en ek het hulle besoek om te kyk of dit moontlik so kan wees. Ons is vriendelik ontvang en op 'n 4x4 voertuig deur die duine tot by die strand vervoer. Daar was na meer as drie eeue natuurlik niks van 'n wrak te sien nie. Ons beraadslaag nog, maar na my mening sou die skipper vir beskutting teen die somerwind nader onder die suidelike wal geanker het, met ander woorde nader aan die Bergriviermond. (sien kaart).² Maar ook dit is nie geboekstaaf nie. Miskien word daar eendag huise tussen die duine langs die see gebou, en word die massagraf ontdek.

1. AJ Boeseken: *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad*, deel 3. Inleiding, g.p.

2. B. Brommer (red.): *Grote Atlas van de VOC deel V Africa*. Kaart van de St Helena Baaij, p.258.

From the Academy

Review:

In the popular imagination, Cape slavery is mostly associated with Southeast Asia. But as historians of the Cape know well, about half of the total number of slaves who arrived at the Cape of Good Hope until the early 19th century originated from the southwestern corner of the Indian Ocean: the southeast coast of Africa and Madagascar. Although a fair amount of pioneering work has been done on the slave trade between Cape Town and Madagascar – by the likes of James Armstrong, James Ravell, Maurice Boucher, Andrew Alexander, Dan Sleight and Piet Westra – many of these publications are obscurely published (or not at all!) and little known beyond experts. Now Michael Charles Reidy, who is well known for his 1997 UCT MA thesis, 'The admission of slaves and "prize slaves" into the Cape Colony, 1797-1818', has produced a long article in which he pulls together several strands of the previous research on the Cape-Madagascar slave trade and presents new evidence: 'VOC Slave Trading Strategies on the Madagascar to Cape Slave Route, 1676-1781', *HumaNetten* 47 (Autumn 2021), pp. 14-55.

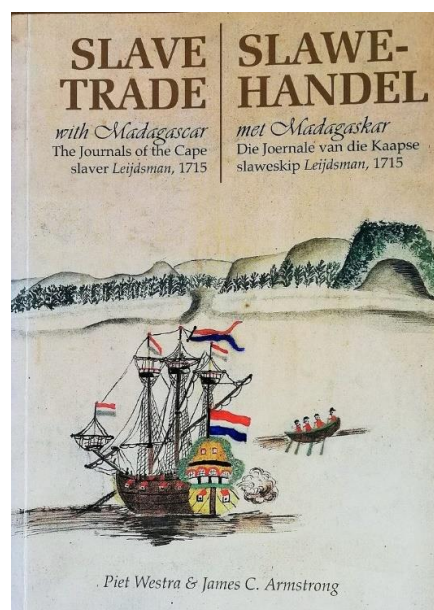
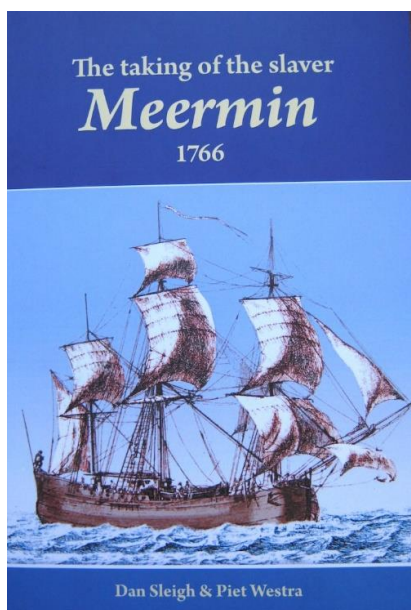
Reidy stresses in the opening pages of his article the fact that the transatlantic slave trade was not hermetically sealed off from that in the Indian Ocean World. In fact, thanks to the extensive work done on the Atlantic slave trade, we now know that at least 9% of slaves who ended up in the western half of the Atlantic world actually came from the southwestern parts of the Indian Ocean: not just the Swahili coast and Mozambique, but also Madagascar and the

Mascarene islands. Cape Town was an important node in a slave trading network that connected this part of the Indian Ocean world with ports as far north as New York and Boston. Reidy quotes Lord Macartney, who already in 1798 observed that the Cape of Good Hope served as the “masterlink of connection between the western and eastern world” (p. 19).

Reidy divides the Cape-Madagascar slave trade into two phases: 1676-1715 when the trade route included sailing via Dutch Mauritius, and after a hiatus during which the Cape VOC authorities disastrously attempted trading directly at Rio de la Goa, a second phase which was inaugurated with the expedition of the *Brak* to Madagascar in 1741. He claims that previous studies of specific slave voyages ‘do not explain how these voyages relate to the VOC slave trade to Madagascar as a whole’ (p. 16), which he aims to correct in his article.

The article is divided into two parts. In the first, Reidy argues very strongly for the important role of ships’ instructions (*instructiën*) and ships’ journals (*dagregisters* or *scheepsjoernalen*) in organizing the Cape-Madagascar slave trade. Copies of all such papers relevant to slave voyages, including the trading on land, were carefully copied and held safe in the secretary of the Political Council at the Cape, in addition to the central offices of the VOC in Amsterdam. In fact, while much of the VOC’s administrative records were destroyed during the Napoleonic wars, shipping records were carefully kept. For this reason, we have near complete documentation of the 40 slave voyages from the Cape to Madagascar.

An intriguing fact that Reidy highlights is that for the very first slave voyage to Madagascar, the VOC authorities drew upon the West Indian Company’s instructions for slave trading, thus connecting ‘the transatlantic slave trade with the slave trade of the South-West Indian Ocean’ (p. 22) in yet another way. Each successive voyage to Madagascar took with it all the records of previous voyages in order to inform the slave traders of conditions on the island and ways in which to conduct the trade. The VOC authorities at the Cape regularly tried to buy copies of the ships’ papers of foreign slave traders who visited Madagascar. By the time when the *Brak* re-opened the Cape-Madagascar slave trade in 1740-41, its instructions drew on the trade journals of six previous voyages to Madagascar, dating back to 1676. While Reidy does not make this point, this information again demonstrates forcefully that the VOC’s was an empire build on knowledge and paper, and that actions were informed by careful study and rational decision making. This was a *trading* company, not a bunch of boisterous adventurers.



The second half of Reidy's article deals with the slave trade on the island of Madagascar, as conducted by the traders dispatched by the Cape authorities. This material is better known thanks to the work of Armstrong, Sleigh and Alexander on specific voyages. However, Reidy's bird's-eye view of the entire period results in some interesting observations. Thus, while up to the mid-18th century most Malagasy slaves were war captives, by the second half of the century, most such slaves were the victims of violent kidnapping by kings and chiefs of the island for the sake of the slave trade. Reidy discusses 'the indispensable role of intermediaries in the dealings between VOC slave-commissioners' and various Malagasy kings (pp. 40-41) and provides fascinating descriptions of the 'welcoming ceremonies' which preceded trade (in which alcohol and tobacco played an important mediating role).

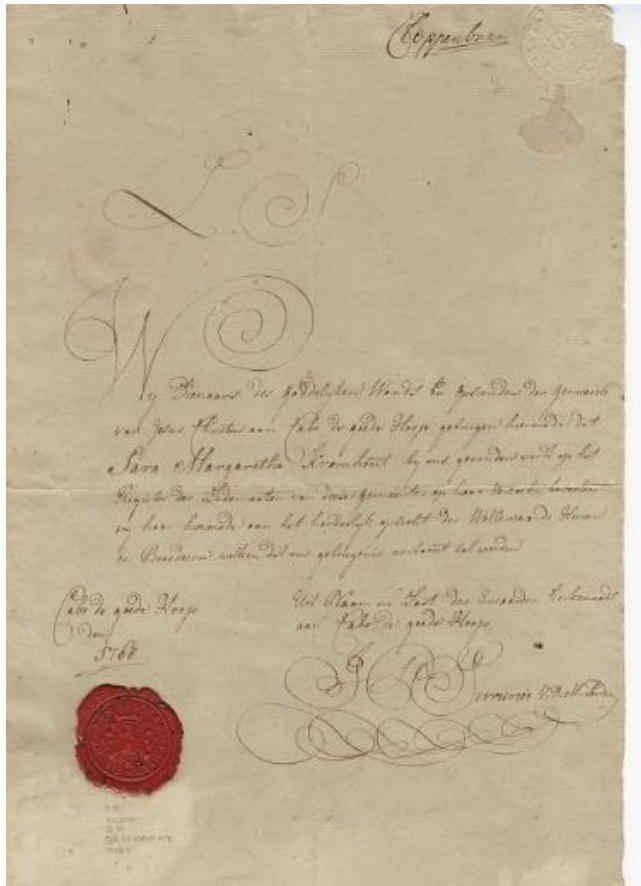
This new article by Reidy is a timely reminder of the importance of the Cape-Madagascar slave trade. It again demonstrates the central role of Cape Town as a node in a global network of trade and knowledge, one that includes the sale and transportation of human beings. It is a pity that Reidy's article too – like so many of those studies that preceded his – is also published in a rather obscure venue, thus continuing to obscure this aspect of the global trade in slaves from scholars of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds. The time is ripe for a big book that discusses all aspects of the Cape-Madagascar slave trade – placing it in both its global and regional contexts, an endeavour that is facilitated by the fact that so much of the primary sources needed for such a study are now readily available online. – Prof. G Groenewald

Interested readers can request a copy of this article from ggroenewald@uj.ac.za

Nee, nie die eerste keer nie

'Vir die eerste keer in die land se geskiedenis is 'n openbare bestuurspos gevul deur die lot te laat beslis,' is op die radio en in koerante beweer nadat 'n munisipale burgemeester in Desember 2021 gekies is deur 'n muntstuk op te skiet. Nee; dit het al tevore gebeur. Na die skielike dood van goewerneur Van Kervel op 19 September 1737 het sowel Sekunde Swellengrebel as Fiskaal Van den Henghel aanspraak gemaak op die voorsitterskap van die Politieke Raad en die pos van waarnemende gesaghebber. Op die Raadsvergadering van 20 September het hulle hul aansprake voorgelê en beredeneer. Daar is oor die saak gestem, met drie stemme vir elkeen. Toe is die uitslag met die lot beslis (deur watter metode is nie beskryf nie) en Fiskaal van den Henghel was die wenner. Hy het die pos tot April 1739 bekleed. [GC de Wet (red.): *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad, deel IX*. 20.9.1737, pp.143-146. Pretoria, 1981.]

Collectors' Corner



Translation:

L:S: Cloppenburg. Revenue: 1714 12 stuyvers.

We servants of God and Ministers of the congregation of Jesus Christ at the Cape of Good Hope hereby attest that Sara Margaretha Kromhout was found by us to be on the Register of Members of this Congregation; at her request we hereby recommend her to the pastoral care of the Right Reverend Lords and Brethren to whom this testimonial may be shown.

In the name and by order of the honourable Church Council at the Cape of Good Hope

J:P: Serrurier V.D.M. Ibidem

Cape of Good Hope

The 1768

Seal and motto of the Church Council: 'Hope maketh not ashamed' (Hope does not disappoint)

There are two watermarks:

1. The Amsterdam type 3, with KH below.
2. The VOC emblem with an A above.

- Dr M. Barter.

Oorspronklik:

‘LS (*Lectori Salutem*)

Wij dienaars des goddelijken woord en opsienders der gemeente van Jesus Christus aan Cabo de Goede Hoop getuijge hiermede dat Sara Margaretha (*sic*) Kromhout by ons gevonden wordt op het Register der Ledematen van deese gemeente, op haar Versoek beveelen wij haar hiermede aan het herderlijk opsicht der Weleerwaarde Heeren en Broederen welken dit ons getuijgenis vertoont sal worden.

Uit Naam en Last der Eerwaarden Kerkeraadt aan Cabo de Goede Hoop

J.P. Serrurier VDM (‘van de Meester’) Ibidem

Cabo de Goede Hoop

den1768

Seël en leuse van die Kerkraad: *De Hoop Beschaamd Niet.*’

Notas: Sara Magdalena Kromhout (gedoop 16.5. 1734) was die tweede kind van Johann Michael Kromhout (oorspronklik Krummholz?) van Königsberg, van 1728 af tot 1733 ’n soldaat in die VOC se garnisoen aan die Kaap, en Sara Magdalena Oelofse. Die dogter Sara is op 10.4.1768 in Kaapstad getroud met baron Christoph Frederik van Knuth, van Kampen in Nederland. Dit kan afgelei word dat sy toe die Kaap verlaat en daarom die attestaat aangevra het. Ds JP Serrurier was van 1760 tot 1804 predikant van die Groote Kerk in die Heerengracht in Kaapstad.

Die dokument is formeel bekend as ’n Attestaat, deur die kerkraad van die Gereformeerde Kerk (nou Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk) uitgereik op versoek van ’n lid van ’n gemeente wat van plan is om te verhuis en dus van gemeente te verwissel. Daarin getuig die predikant dat die persoon ’n lidmaat van sy gemeente is, en beveel hy haar / hom aan by die owerhede van enige gemeente waarby sy / hy later wil aansluit. Die papier waarop die dokument geskryf is bevat twee watermerke, een van die stad Amsterdam waar dit gemaak is, en ’n seldsame watermerk van die VOC-kamer Amsterdam wat die papier bestel het. Die seël in rooi lak (links onder) was die amptelike seël van die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika. ’n Bedrag van 14 stuivers is aan die VOC-administrasie betaal (regs bo) om die dokument as amptelik te registreer. – Red.

Bronne:

CG de Villiers en C Pama: *Geslachtsregisters van die Ou Kaapse Families, deel 1*. Kaapstad, 1966.

J. Hoge: *Personalia of the Germans at the Cape, 1652-1806*. Argiefjaarboek vir SA Geskiedenis, 1946.

VOC slaving in WIC waters

In the previous edition of *Generale Missive*, readers encountered evidence of the sale and transfer of an enslaved man named Jan. Thanks to Dr M. Barter, **Collectors’ Corner (1)** featured the record of transfer of the enslaved man Jan van Tutoucorijn (Coromandel Coast) from Emanuel Jasper van Ceulen, skipper, to Hester van Lier, widow.

By the time that transaction took place, enslaved people had been transported to the Cape for around two decades already. Some of the enslaved individuals arrived on board Company vessels, embarked by ship’s captains or crew who intended to trade for their own profit when they stopped at the Cape en route to *Patria*. Other enslaved people who were disembarked in those early years arrived on board slave ships, captured from the Republic’s enemies in the Atlantic and rerouted to the VOC’s station at the Cape. This was the case of the well-known *Amersfoort*, which captured a Portuguese slaver in the Atlantic and sailed the enslaved cargo to the Cape. 166 Angolan captives were disembarked in early 1658, and are remembered as the first shipment of enslaved people to the Cape.

Less well-known, is the arrival a few weeks later of the vessel *Hasselt*. Built in Amsterdam in 1656, the *Hasselt* was a pinas built for trade on the West Coast of Africa. It was then dispatched to the Cape and from Table Bay set sail for the Guinea Coast. But what was the VOC doing, conducting slave trade on the West Coast of Africa?

During the 1650s, both the Dutch East India Company and the West India Company were aware of the anomaly that was the Cape. Referring to Cape Town as between east and west has become common – situated as it is ‘between’ the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, ‘between’ the two major arenas of maritime slave trade, and ‘between’ the Republic and the company world in Asia – but from a legal point of view, the Cape was not between anything. Table Valley lies west of the specific point Cape of Good Hope, and therefore the maritime replenishment station that grew into Cape Town was within the WIC’s Atlantic Charter area. In order for the VOC to trade on the West Coast of Africa, the company had to acquire permission from the WIC, which it did in 1657. Company advocate Pieter van Dam records the arrangement between the companies according to which the VOC paid the WIC in recognition of the latter’s charter rights over the area, and the VOC received permission to trade in enslaved people along the coast.

The *Hasselt* and a smaller vessel the *Maria*, also built in Amsterdam, conducted their trade at Popo, on the Guinea Coast. Over the course of 10 weeks, 271 enslaved people were taken on board, and then the *Hasselt* faced the difficult journey back to the Cape. 43 of the enslaved on onboard died on this other middle passage. Only a few weeks after the *Amersfoort*’s arrival, the *Hasselt* arrived in Table Bay in May 1658 where she disembarked 228 enslaved individuals.

While the Cape Company officials appear to have been prepared to continue trade on the West Coast of Africa, their view soon shifted and remained focussed on the Indian Ocean as a procurement zone. The VOC was no stranger to these networks of enslavement and trade, having insinuated itself into them earlier in the century. For decades then, the Company looked east to supply the growing colony at the Cape with enslaved people.

* I have recounted these events more fully in a chapter in the Amsterdam City Council’s commissioned research into the role of the city in slavery. Spanning the east and west, contributors traced the involvement of Amsterdammers in slavery and slave trade – from building ships and consuming slave-produced goods, to financing slave trade and occupying decision-making positions in the companies and city administration. It was published as *De Slavernij in Oost en West. Het Amsterdam Onderzoek* (Amsterdam: Spectrum, 2020) and contributed to the city council’s decision to make an apology for Amsterdam’s involvement in slavery. Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema offered an apology on 1 July 2021, the day on which abolition of slavery in Suriname and the Dutch Caribbean (1863) is commemorated.

- Dr K. Ekama.

Selected Sources:

C1, Resolutions of the Council of Policy of Cape of Good Hope. Western Cape Archives and Record Service.

The *Hasselt* can be found on www.vocsite.nl; www.slavevoyages.org.

Mbeki, Linda and Matthias van Rossum. ‘Private slave trade in the Dutch Indian Ocean World: A study into the networks and backgrounds of the slavers and the enslaved in South Asia and South Africa.’ *Slavery & Abolition* 38:1 (2017): 95-116.

Stapel, F.W. and C.W.Th. baron van Boetzelaer van Asperen en Dubbeldam (eds). *Pieter van Dam’s Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie 1639-1701*, 8 vols. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1927-1954.

Verstegen, Math. *Kaapstad: een onwettig kind van de VOC*. Zaltbommel: Europese Bibliotheek, 2002.

Vink, Markus. “‘The World’s Oldest Trade’”: Dutch slavery and slave trade in the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century,’ *Journal of World History* 14:2 (2003): 131-77.

For more on the Mayor’s apology see <https://nos.nl/artikel/2387499-burgemeester-halsema-biedt-excuses-aan-voor-slavernijverleden-amsterdam> (in Dutch).

New Books

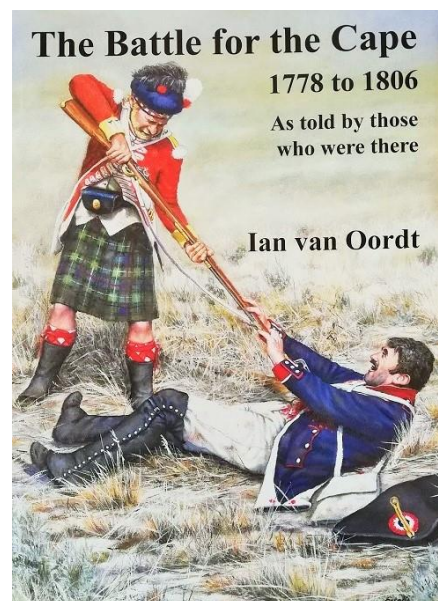
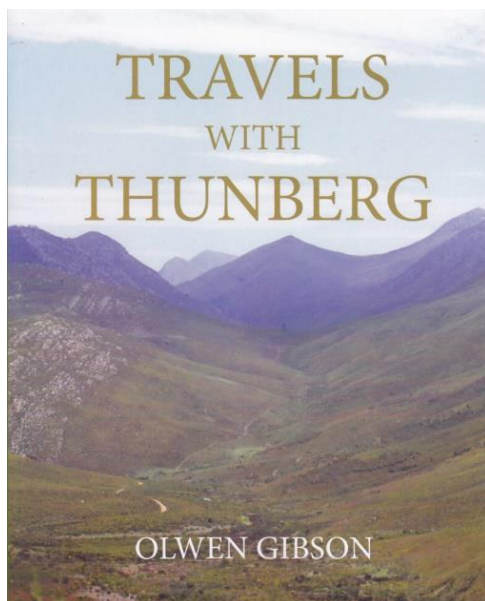
O. Gibson: *Travels with Thunberg*.

96 pages, bibliography, alphabetical index, illustrations include 11 sketch maps, 28 botanical paintings and 33 photographs. O.Gibson Publisher.

Carl Thunberg, a pupil of the great Linnaeus, undertook three pioneering journeys in South Africa during the Eighteenth Century, collecting plants and animal specimens to send home to Sweden for scientific purposes. The author, Olwen Gibson, armed with the diaries of Thunberg, Masson and Sparrman, set out to follow in Thunberg’s wagon tracks. This book is an account of her travels with Thunberg over the years as she gradually became acquainted with his routes; and with the man himself. It is illustrated with her photographs, hand drawn maps and sketches, and her beautiful water-colour paintings of the plants that Thunberg would have encountered along the way.

The author is a retired geography teacher, a Kirstenbosch volunteer guide with a considerable knowledge of the Cape's indigenous flora, a keen mountaineer and botanical artist, who lives in Cape Town. The book can be obtained from the author for R250; she can be contacted by email: olwen.gibson@gmail.com, or from the Botanical Society's Kirstenbosch Bookshop, where it is priced at R350

(website <https://kirstenboschbookshop.co.za/product/travels-with-thunberg/>)



Ian van Oordt: *The Battle for the Cape, 1778-1806.*

Hard cover with dust jacket, 518 pages, 16 maps, 28 colour illust., references. Price: R1500. I. van Oordt Publisher. This is a diplomatic history of three decades of British effort, that included three physical attacks (1781, 1795, 1806), to wrest the Cape of Good Hope from the Dutch East India Company and later the Batavian Republic, for the sake of British trade with India, at the heart of the growing British Empire. The book covers a Big Bang period, similar to (in theory, at least) the Big Bang at the moment of Creation when massive amounts of positive and negative energy were released, which to this day still influence our lives. (The creation of the VOC in 1602 was another such Big Bang event.) The outcome of the American War of Independence (1775-1783) forced a change in British foreign policy, when the USA entered upon world trade as a young giant with its own shipbuilding industry, a powerful navy, enterprising merchants with a strong mercantile fleet, a rival to British trading interests and a friend of France and its allies, which included the Netherlands with its colonies at the Cape and the East Indies.

Every page is a Pandora's box of original evidence from British and Dutch archives, consisting largely of quotations taken from parliamentary speeches, diplomatic notes, private letters, consular messages and military orders. There is plenty of new material, e.g. that it is not at all certain that the Batavian fleet under admiral Lucas that ignominiously surrendered to the British in Saldanha Bay in 1796 was sent to retake the Cape. It also makes plain what is not readily apparent in the cloaked language of politicians, Parliament and the diplomatic corps. For example: John Barrow wrote in 1806: '*The grand objection against making the Cape an emporium between Europe... the East Indies...the West Indies... America and Asia, is the prejudice it would necessarily occasion to the sales of Leadenhall-street.*' The author translates this into plain language: 'The grand objection to the English East India Company against making the Cape an emporium between Europe..., the East Indies..., the West Indies, ... America and Asia, is the loss of sales and profit it would suffer.' (p.43)

Why did the British government so desperately want the Cape? Possession of the Cape was the key to the South Atlantic and Indian oceans, which gave the owner seven or eight military, maritime and commercial advantages, all worth the cost and trouble of a long war. While the Cape burghers were sick and tired of 143 years of VOC government and hoped for American-style independence, they were totally ignored by all the wrangling parties, and in the author's words, in the end found themselves 'betrayed on every side,' that is, by the deposed Dutch stadholder, by Lords Seventeen, the VOC government at the Cape, its military officers, e.g. R.J. Gordon, and by the new foreign ruler.

The author explores, enquires and then reveals, what the Irish social philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797) called 'A State in the guise of a Merchant,' which each time turns out to be the English East India Company. It is a story of Machiavellian machinations and cloak and dagger activities including assassination, deceit and treason, as well as military violence and assault by sea and land. The three decades of relentless British plotting for the sake of its East India Company and its trade with India, culminated on 8 January 1806 in the bloody hand-to-hand on the sandy plain east of Blaauwberg, which is illustrated on the dust jacket.

About a third of the book is dedicated to the Battle of Blaauwberg. This section contains, in remarkable detail, information about the battle and its aftermath, as well as the ships, regiments, individuals, weapons, uniforms and accoutrements involved. One of the many illustrations is of the ivory case that was in General Janssens' pocket when a musket ball struck

him in the chest; it broke into pieces but saved his life. (It is preserved in the Nationaal Archief, Den Haag.) [Obtain copies from the author, at Ian van Oordt, cell 076 315 7713 [or battleforthecape@gmail.com](mailto:battleforthecape@gmail.com) [or ianatbuilt2scale@gmail.com](mailto:ianatbuilt2scale@gmail.com)]

Archeologen op zoek naar resten Johan van Oldenbarnevelt



Teregstelling van Van Oldenbarnevelt.

Foto: Historiek, 15 Julie 2020

‘Er komt een groote archeologisch onderzoek waarbij geprobeerd wordt de stoffelijke resten van Johan van Oldenbarnevelt te vinden. Dat heeft minister van Engelshoven (Cultuur) namens het kabinet per brief aan de Tweede Kamer laten weten.

Raadpensionaris Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, een van de grondleggers van de Nederlandse republiek, werd na een conflict met prins Maurits, de zoon van Willem van Oranje, op 13 mei 1619 op beschuldiging van landverraad onthoofd op het Binnenhof in Den Haag. Zijn resten werden hierna in een kist bijgezet in de Hofkapel bij het Binnenhof. Eind negentiende eeuw was deze kapel dusdanig vervallen dat deze werd afgebroken. Tijdens deze werkzaamheden zijn verschillende lichaamsresten gevonden. De grafkelder bleef echter ongemoeid en werd samen met de overblijfselen dichtgemetseld.

SP-Kamerlid Ronald van Raak pleit al lange tijd voor een zoektocht naar de stoffelijke overblijfselen van Van Oldenbarnevelt. Hij vindt het een vreemde zaak dat de resten van de prominente staatsman mogelijk in een vergeten kelder liggen. Twee jaar geleden maakte het kabinet al bekend de mogelijkheden van een zoektocht te gaan onderzoeken. De verbouwing van het Binnenhof wordt nu aangegrepen om dat onderzoek inderdaad te laten plaatsvinden. De Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed (RCE), verantwoordelijk voor het onderzoek, meldt hierover:

“De wetenschappelijke en maatschappelijke betekenis van deze plek is dusdanig groot dat het kabinet kiest voor het uitvoeren van deze opgraving. Zo kunnen we archeologisch onderzoek en onze nationale geschiedenis aan een breed publiek presenteren. Dit sluit aan bij de ambitie uit het regeerakkoord om meer aandacht te besteden aan historische plaatsen.”

In de grafkelder onder de Eerste Kamer liggen de resten van enkele honderden andere historische figuren. Door verschillende verbouwingen en herordeningen van de graven liggen de resten hoogstwaarschijnlijk echter niet meer in de context van hun oorspronkelijke begraafing.

Voor de archeologen wordt het een uitdaging om vast te stellen welke resten precies van Johan van Oldenbarnevelt zijn. En of dat gaat lukken is maar zeer de vraag. Het kabinet tempert in ieder geval de verwachtingen en acht de slagingskans "zeer klein". Op dit moment is bijvoorbeeld nog geen hedendaagse DNA-match beschikbaar waarmee de stoffelijke resten van Johan van Oldenbarnevelt zouden kunnen worden geïdentificeerd. Gehoopt wordt dat men ook de resten van de zoon raadpensionaris zal aantreffen. Deze Reinier werd vier jaar na de dood van zijn vader in Den Haag onthoofd en zijn resten belandden ook in de Hofkapel. Als men twee genetisch nauw verwante skeletten vindt, zou de kans groot zijn dat het om Johan en Reinier van Oldenbarnevelt gaat.' -Yuri Visser: Historiek, 15.7.2020.

Behouwde vaert / Selamat jalan / Go well

D. Sleigh (Dr): Redakteur
Jean Sleigh: Tegnies
13 December 2021