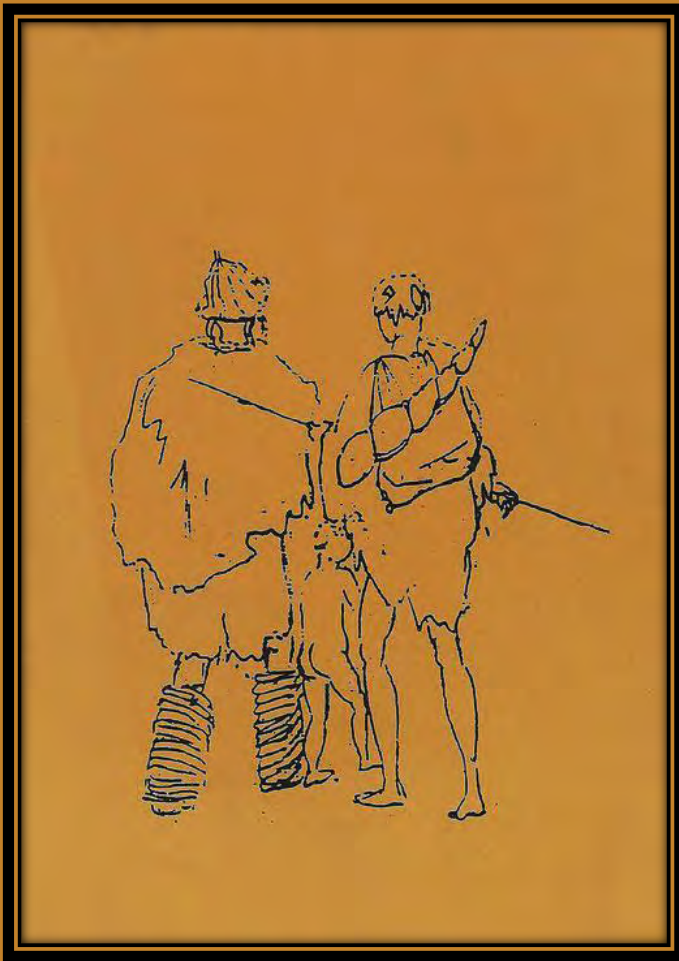


UL No. 21



IN A *KIND* OF CUSTODY

For EVA's sake ... Who
speaks for KROTOA?

Uprooted Lives

Unfurling the Cape of Good Hope's Earliest Colonial Inhabitants (1652-1713)

Mansell G Upham

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*Unfurling the Cape of Good Hope's Earliest
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Mansell G. Upham



*For min Far, min Mor
og min søstre*

Tak for altid væsen ...



Preface

Timon: Earth, yield me roots
He digs
Who seeks for better of thee, sauce his palate
With thy most operant poison. What is here?
Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold?
No, gods, I am no idle votarist.
Roots, you clear heavens! Thus much of this will make
Black white, foul fair, wrong right,
Base noble, old young, coward valiant.
Ha, you gods! Why this? What, this, you gods? Why, this
Will lug your priests and servants from your sides,
Pluck stout men's pillows from below their heads.
This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions, bless th'accursed,
Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves,
And give them title, knee and approbation,
With senators on the bench. This is it
That makes the wappened widow wed again –
She, whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores
Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices
To th'April day again. Come, damned earth,
Thou common whore of mankind, that puts odds
Among the rout of nations, I will make thee
Do thy right nature ...
William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*

Since 1976 **Eva Meerhoff, born Krotoa (c. 1643-1674) and Catharina (Groote Catrijn) van Paliacatta [Pulicat] (c. 1631-1683)** have haunted me. Discovering Krotoa (ancestor to *both* my father and my mother) and *Groote Catrijn* (*seven* traceable lineal descents – five maternal and two paternal) to be two of my most prolific ancestors; and also that these two formidable women are lesser known ancestors (even multiple) to so many other colonially induced people *rooted* at the tip of Africa – like so many other ancestral beings from my/our past – were reasons enough for me to give them undivided attention. But the discovery that Krotoa was the first indigenous Cape woman to be colonially incorporated; and that *Groote Catrijn* was the first recorded female convict banished to the Dutch-occupied Cape of Good Hope and its first Dutch East India Company (VOC) slave to be liberated - exacted their release from the shadows demanding that *their stories* be told. My ongoing research into the lives of especially the Cape's earliest colonial women (indigene, settler, sojourner, slave, convict) – women being the *fons et origo* of ongoing culture - affords me the opportunity to continue revisiting my original research - many initially featured (since 1997) in numerous articles in



Capensis, quarterly journal of the Genealogical Society of South Africa (Western Cape). Krotoa's and *Groote Catrijn*'s importance and that of their colourful contemporaries has now been reassessed in terms of unravelling and understanding more fully the impact of Dutch colonization at the tip of Africa. There is now a heightened awareness in South Africa of indigenusness and slavery. Until recently, however, both Krotoa and *Groote Catrijn* – and many other folk - have been mostly overlooked or excluded from the orthodox and politically selective slave pantheon currently encountered in the rewriting and re-institutionalization of South African historiography. The reality of *shared* indigenous and slave roots across a diminishing racial or ethnic divide, however, cannot any longer be suppressed. There is a need for expanded biographies on, and ongoing genealogical inquiries into, not only these very important early Cape colonial figures, but many others.

More than 30 years of researching and documenting each recorded individual that peopled the early colonial period of the VOC-occupied Cape of Good Hope (1652-1713), and given the present-day dearth of knowledge regarding diasporized slaves and the ethnocidally challenged indigenes, at a time when the need to incorporate the historically marginalized underclasses into a more global consciousness is being increasingly recognized, the publication of accessible representative biographies has become imperative. Ever since Anna J. Böeseke's seminal work *Slaves and Free Blacks at the Cape 1658-1700* in 1977, little attempt has been made to write more detailed biographies on any of the individuals originally referred to by Böeseke or any other people for that matter - thus the *raison d'être* for this collection of biographical excursions from the initial period of Dutch colonization. This collection comprises mostly indigenous and slave biographies for the period (1652-1713) ending with the devastating smallpox epidemic that utterly transformed the little colony forever thereafter. The lives of a few hundred people have been recollected in varying degrees of detail depending on how much has survived in the written record.

This work is also a tribute to my own indigenous and slave ancestors thus far unearthed from this period - consciousness of whom has given me a whole new more meaningful sense of being 'ameri-eurafricasian' and then some ...:

the Goringhiacona:

Eva Meerhoff (born **Krotoa**)

the 'Bastaard Hottentot':

Frans Jacobs van de Caep

the African slaves:

Catharina Alexander van de Caep

Maria van Guinea [Benin]

Cecilia van Angola

Dorothea van Angola

Manuel van Angola

Diana van Madagascar

the Asian slaves:

Catharina (*Groote Catrijn*) van Paliacatta

Engela / Angela (*Maaij Ans(i)ela* van Bengale



Catharina (Catrijn) van Bengale
Catharina (Catrijn) van Malabar
Maria Magdalena (Mariana) Jacobse van Ceylon [Sri Lanka]
Jacob van Macassar
Maria Jacobs: van Batavia
and the pardoned Chinese convict:
Lim / Lin Inko *alias* Abraham de Veij.

Although much of South Africa's slave and indigenous heritage is being rediscovered, little about the people dating back to the 16th century has hitherto been unearthed. The 18th and 19th centuries have been more accessible to researchers and historians especially in view of the more legible and easier-to-read records. The 17th century has proved to be a lot more inaccessible due to the more difficult Gothic Dutch script. Invariably researchers (especially academics) have been reluctant to share their transcriptions of archival documents consulted when publishing. I have opted, instead, to rather share my transcriptions in order to arrive at greater accuracy, insight and understanding of these difficult records. It is hoped that more fleshed-out biographies of many more slaves, indigenes and others will follow.

My heartfelt gratitude to:

- my mother **Maria (Ria) Catherine Upham, née Priem (1933-1996)** and my sisters, **Beryl Catherine Brighton, née Upham (1955-2002)** & **Anne Caroline Upham (1957-1988)**, for undying inspiration;
- my father **William (Bill) Mansell Upham (1933-2006)** for being a free thinking devil-of-an-advocate
- **Margaret Cairns (1912-2009)** for her ever-willing assistance and being my micro-historical muse;
- **Anna J. Böeseken (1906-1997)** for her mammoth contribution to South African historiography; and
- **Delia Robertson** for moral and other support - never doubting the value and relevance of my research.

Mansell George Upham
Tokyo, Japan
October 2012



Guide to the Text

General Historical Background

The wind-swept Cape of Good Hope ('the Cape') was a Dutch colonial translittoral holding or possession that emerged quite late (1652) in an already established colonial empire under the control of 'The United East India Company' or *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* ('the VOC') stretching from Southern Africa to Timor. The VOC-empire had grafted itself onto an earlier Portuguese empire, which had already paved the way for increased European colonial expansion into Africa and Asia. Dutch trade with Asia was organized through the VOC in terms of an exclusive charter (1602) from the States-General of the United Provinces of the Free Netherlands (the 'Dutch Republic') for trade and enforcement of Dutch interests against competitors. A commercial as well as a government agent in Asia, its business was conducted by a hierarchy of officials (called merchants) with headquarters in Batavia [Jakarta on Java, Indonesia], after 1619. The directors of the VOC in the Netherlands were known as the Lords Seventeen (*Heeren XVII*). The Company was formally dissolved (31 December 1795) and its debts and possessions taken over by the Batavian Republic, predecessor to the present-day Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The VOC's main priority at the Cape of Good Hope was to provide support to all of its ships that plied between the Netherlands (*Patria*) and the East Indies. This entailed the running of an efficient hospital, burying the dead and the ready supply of food and drink to the survivors. The colonial encroachment (*occupatio*) on aboriginal Khoe/San ('Hottentot'/'Bushmen') lands resulted in the signing of 'treaties' *ex post facto* in attempts to 'legitimize' Dutch occupation in terms of International Law. The Dutch soon rationalized their ill-conceived occupation of the Cape by transforming the refreshment station into a colony, importing slaves and convicts, granting company employees their 'freedom' to become permanent settlers and expanding territorially, thereby colonizing not only their land - but also the Cape aborigines themselves. By the time the Cape was a fully operational VOC refreshment station, *buiten comptoir*¹, factory, residency, fortified settlement and colony, a creole multi-ethnic Dutch-Indies culture had emerged at the tip of Africa (*het uijterste hoeck van Africa*). Significantly, the Cape of Good Hope was the only Dutch colony where the Dutch language, albeit creolized and indigenized, effectively took root and evolved into a formalized and institutionalized language - *Afrikaans*.

¹ *Buiten comptoiren* were out stations or subordinate dependencies, each with its own governor or commander, which before (1652), extended from Ceylon in the west to the Celebes and Japan in the east [CA: BP (*Cape Pamphlets*): Colin Graham Botha, 'Early Cape Matrimonial Law'].



The Cape of Good Hope for that period is best imagined in terms of the present-day Cape Flats once being drifting dunes of sand. Between Cape Town and the second *colony* of Stellenbosch, there lay a waste-land of prehistoric sea-bed making the Cape peninsula appear to be an island cut off from the rest of Africa. The colony was initially a dumping ground for the VOC's sick, dead, political exiles and convicts. The place can be summed up by the following key words: fort, penal settlement, cemetery, hospital, slave lodge, vegetable garden, drinking hole and brothel. Transferred officials and servants could not be expected to stay there indefinitely and 'free-burghers' (*vrijburghers*) - a minority of whom were manumitted slaves termed 'free-blacks' (*vrijzwarten*) - and their wives, if not legally bound to stay for a fixed period as 'free citizens', would have opted to leave sooner. Some even deserted by running or stowing away. There were very few imported women so that there existed a maximum demand for sexual favours from slave women and detribalized aborigines. Some European women, appreciating this chronic shortage, even risked cross-dressing and leaving for the Cape and the East Indies disguised as men. A number were discovered even before their ships sailed past the Cape. Then, there were many more stowaways and high-sea captives. All life revolved around the coming and going of the VOC fleets and its motley crews - and keeping the 'Hottentots' at bay. An overpopulated hospital, multiple burials, illegal trade (either between the ship folk and the free burghers or corrupt officials or local aborigines), fornication, homosexuality, prostitution, gambling, drinking, squabbling, stealing, punishing and killing were the dis/order of the day.

Nomenclature, terminology, Dutch 17th & 18th century writing conventions & archival sources

17th century Dutch writing conventions display a healthy aversion to standardization. There is a tendency in South Africa to convert, incorrectly, old Dutch names found in original documents using modern Afrikaans writing conventions. In particular, the principle of 'writing one concept as one word' derives from a more removed (if not alien) High German convention imposed once written Afrikaans conventions became institutionalized. Hence, the original *Blaauw Berg* is rendered *Blouberg* and re-rendered *Blaauwberg* [*sic*]. The Dutch were happy to abide by the European (proto-international) name generally used for the Cape, viz. the Portuguese *Cabo de Boa Esperanza*. The Dutch, however, often influenced by French, gallicized the latter half of the name: *Cabo de Boa Esperance*. The Dutch rendition of the name is generally found as *Caep de Goede Hoop*. *Caep* or *Caap* is often also found as *Caab*. Place names are used as the Dutch knew them at the time, as opposed to latter-day 'politically correct' names. The spelling of personal names found in the records have been standardized (except when quoted directly from the sources) in order to avoid confusing the reader unnecessarily. Foreign terms are translated into English when they first appear in the text. Archival sources are not referenced separately, but are detailed in endnotes after each chapter.



Naming people

The 17th century Dutch generally used patronyms and toponyms, even when family names or surnames were known or in existence and sometimes used. The use of a family name serves often as an indicator of higher status. One's provenance or place of birth was more important. This is because of the European convention of bureaucratically confining people to their places of birth even if they had already moved away. Slaves were named in the same way. Many toponyms, however, are often interchangeable perhaps due to bureaucratic laxity and/or ignorance when dealing with the places of origin and/or purchase of enslaved and manumitted peoples, *e.g.*:

van Malabar / van Cochin / van Coromandel / van Paliacatta / van Bengale

Currency, weight & measurements

The VOC's monetary unit of account until 1658 consisted of two currencies:

the *guilder* (*gulden*) - also known as *florin* and represented by the symbol *f*; and the *stuiver* (1 *florin* = 20 *stuivers*)

the Spanish-American *rial* - also known as the *real*, *real-of-eight* and *piece-of-eight*. (1 *real* = 48 *stuivers*)

Thereafter the *rixdaalder* (*rixdollar*), abbreviated as *Rds* replaced these as the unit of account and converted generally to the amount of 2.5 to 3 *florins* per *rixdollar*. (1 *rixdollar* = 1 *real* = 3 *florins* = 48 *stuivers*). For the first half of the 17th century the Spanish-American *rial-of-eight* (also found as *real-of-eight*) was widely used in the East by the Dutch as real money and as a unit of account, being usually converted at about 48 *stuivers*, and considered as the (slightly overvalued) equivalent of the *rixdollar* (1 *real* = 2.4 *florins*). By VOC practice the *florin* was valued at 20 *stuivers* in the Netherlands and 16 *stuivers* in the Dutch Indies (including the Cape). As the *rixdollar* converted to 48 *stuivers*, it was worth 2.4 *florins* in the Netherlands and 3 *florins* in the Indies. This variance allowed persons transferring money from the Indies to the Netherlands to make a profit on the exchange rate. The Dutch pound (*pond*) weight most commonly used was the Amsterdam pound which amounted to 0.494 kg. Land (*erwen*) in South Africa was (and still is) measured by means of *morgen* and *roeden*.



IN A *KIND* OF CUSTODY

For EVA's sake ... Who speaks for KROTOA?²

Krotoa (pronounced *Krotwa*) (c. 1643-1674) - Cape of Good Hope aboriginal woman of the **Goringhaicona** clan born on Robben Island. Reared by the 1st VOC commander **Jan van Riebeeck** and utilised by the Dutch as interpreter, envoy, trader, guide, cultural broker, mediator, agent, and informant. She is the Cape's 1st indigene to be baptised (3 May 1662 as *Eva*) and to marry according to Christian rites (2 June 1664). Wife of the VOC's surgeon and superintendent of Robben Island, the Copenhagen-born **Pieter Meerhoff** (killed 1667/8 at Antongil Bay, Madagascar while on a trading expedition). As widow, falls into disgrace with the Dutch authorities who disapprove of her drinking, sexual, and native habits. Detained and banished without trial to Robben Island. Dies there (29 July 1674) aged 31 years. Her remains are later removed from the demolished church at the Castle and buried in the foundations of the Dutch Reformed Groote Kerk in Adderley Street, Cape Town. Her progeny forms a substantial proportion of the people classified "white" under the apartheid regime.



Sketch by George Duff (fl. 1640-1860)

² This article first appeared in the quarterly journal of the Western Cape Branch of the Genealogical Society of South Africa, *Capensis*, no. 4 (November 1989), pp. 6-13.



Introduction

One may cover over secret actions, but to be
silent on what all the world knows, and things
which have had effects which are public and of so
much consequence, is an inexcusable defect.

Montaigne, On the duty of historians

Since 1990 there has been a spate and flurry of dubious writings, performances and *exposés* - all curiously and invariably mostly by women - on a woman and key historical figure called **Krotoa**. These women are:

the poet and children's story writer: **Karen Press** (1990)³, the *Sarie*-sponsored performing / cabaret artist: **Antoinette Pienaar** (1995, 1996 & 1997)⁴, the journalist **Beverley Mitchell** (1993)⁵, the academics: **Candy Malherbe** (1990 & 1996)⁶, **Frances Karttunen** (1994)⁷, **Barbara Hutton** (1994)⁸, **Carmel Schrire** (1995)⁹, **Yvette Abrahams** (1996)¹⁰, **Christina Landman** (1996)¹¹, **Julia Wells** (1997)¹², **Harriet Deacon** (1997)¹³, **Carli Coetzee** (1993, 1997 & 1998)¹⁴, **Natascha Distiller** and **Meg Samuelson** (2006)¹⁵.

³ See (1) her children's story book **Krotoa** (illustrations by Jeff Rankin, Centaur Publications, Pietermaritzburg 1990) & (2) her poem **Krotoa's Story** (Buchu Books, Cape Town 1990).

⁴ The *Sarie*-sponsored performing/cabaret artist who performed the show **Krotoa** at: the Klein Karoo Arts Festival (1995), the Grahamstown Arts Festival (1995), the Castle (1995), the SABC Auditorium, Sea Point (1996) & the Thabong Theatre / Civic Theatre (1997).

⁵ See her article 'Van Kraal tot Kasteel: Die Opkoms en die Val van Krotoa', *Vrye Weekblad* 21 May 1993.

⁶ See her mini-biography **Krotoa, called 'Eva': A Woman Between**, The Centre for African Studies (Communications no. 19/1990), University of Cape Town 1990.

⁷ See her biographical sketch entitled 'Africans and Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope: **Eva (ca. 1642-1674)**' in her chapter 4 entitled 'More Lives, Familiar Stories' (pp. 248-252) & (her 'Epilogue: **Eva's** Namesake' (pp. 308-309) in *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey 1994).

⁸ See her short piece entitled **Krotoa : Autshumato's** [sic] niece and the accompanying spurious portrait of **Krotoa** (p. 21) in *Robben Island: Symbol of resistance*, Sached Books, Johannesburg / Mayibuye Books, Bellville 1994.

⁹ See her cursory biographical ramblings on **Eva (aka "Krotoa")** in her chapter entitled 'Chronicles of Contact & her 'Conclusion' in *Digging through Darkness: Chronicles of an Archaeologist*, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg 1996 (1st published by University Press of Virginia 1995) pp. 65-68, 70 & 221-22.

¹⁰ See her article 'Was **Eva** Raped? An Exercise in Speculative History', *Kronos Journal of Cape History*, no. 23, Institute for Historical Research, University of the Western Cape November 1996, pp. 3-21.

¹¹ See her article 'The Religious **Krotoa (c. 1642-1674)**', *Kronos Journal of Cape History*, no. 23, Institute for Historical Research, University of the Western Cape (November 1996), pp. 22-35.

¹² 'The story of **Eva & Pieter**: transcultural marriage on the road to success in **Van Riebeeck's** colonial outpost', paper presented at the *Interdisciplinary Conference on Gender & Colonialism* at the University of the Western Cape 13-15 January 1997.

¹³ See her mini-biography entitled **Krotoa** (pp. 29-30) in *The Essential Robben Island*, Mayibuye Books, Bellville & David Philip Publishers, Cape Town 1997 which followed from Nigel Penn's



André P. Brink, it should be noted, acknowledges relying on **Candy Malherbe** in his novel *Imaginings of Sand* (1996) when using the story of **Eva**. Since then a biographical sketch on **Krotoa** has also been featured by genealogist **Ockert Malan** (1997).¹⁶ Mention should also be made of the entry for **Krotoa** featured in *A Dictionary of South African History* (1998)¹⁷. The authors omit the fact that her documentable progeny forms a major cross-section of South Africa's population formerly classified 'white'. Why could they also not mention that her other progeny also could, not unlikely, possibly form a 'hidden' part of the Cape's predominantly *afro-eurasian* population? These vital facts appear to be politically incorrect. Even **Harriet Deacon** in her *The Essential Robben Island* omits this thereby writing **Krotoa's** descendants out of history.

A Krotoa-descendant speaks out...

As a proven documentable direct descendant of **Krotoa** - in my case actually a *double* descendant through my father and mother - and having researched her in depth for up to 35 years, I have advocated her story often enough in public and in print.¹⁸ Furthermore, already in 1977 (ever since establishing documentary proof) my descent from **Krotoa** has been constantly publicly affirmed. This was at a time when people classified 'white' by the apartheid system in spite of oneself,

chapter 'Robben Island 1488-1805' in *The Island: A History of Robben Island 1488-1990* (ed. Harriet Deacon), Mayibuye Books & David Philip, Cape Town 1996.

¹⁴ (1) 'The Company and the Land: Visions of Disorder and Profit', Africa Seminar, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town 18 August 1993; (2) paper entitled '**Krotoa**, the Uncanny Mother' presented at the *Interdisciplinary Conference on Gender & Colonialism* at the University of the Western Cape 13-15 January 1997; (3) '**Krotoa** remembered: a mother of unity, a mother of sorrows?' *Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa* (Sarah Nuttall & Carli Coetzee (eds.), Oxford University Press, Cape Town 1998).

¹⁵ See Meg Samuelson, *Krotoa-Eva: Traitor, Translator, Rainbow Mother. Remembering the Nation, Dismembering Women? Stories of the South African Transition*, Cape Town, (Ph.D. Thesis) 2005; Natasha Distiller & Meg Samuelson, "Denying the coloured mother": Gender and race in South Africa, Eurozine (2006) <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-03-02-distiller-en.html>.

¹⁶ Ockert Malan, *Die Van Schalkwyks van die Nieuweveld* (privately published Stellenbosch 1997). See his biographical sketches of both **Eva Goringhaicona** & **Pieter van Meerhoff** on pp. 7-8.

¹⁷ Saunders, Christopher & Southey, Nicholas: *A Dictionary of South African History* (David Philip Cape Town & Johannesburg 1998), pp. 100-101.

¹⁸ Public presentations on **Eva Meerhoff** were given by the writer inter alia to the Genealogical Society of South Africa, Cape Town (17 November 1987), Pretoria (24 August 1987) & Bloemfontein (22 July 1989); the Cadets for *Level II Diplomatic Training*, Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria (1990) & *The Asiatic Society of Japan*, Tokyo (13 December 1993). See also *Watashi no sosen Minami Afurika no senjumin desu ... (My ancestor is a South African aborigine ...)* featured in Okuno Yasuhiko's photographic exhibition and book *Ubuntu - Ningen: Minami Afurika ni Ikiru (Ubuntu - Humanity: Living in South Africa)* (Tokyo & Oita-ken, Japan March 1994); Melanie Gosling, 'Return remains plea', *The Cape Times* 10 April 1995; Adelle Horler, 'The sad life of **Saartjie** the 'beast'', *Drum* June 1995, Eddie Koch, 'Bring Back the Hottentot Venus', *Mail & Guardian* 15 June 1995, Caroline Dumay, '<<Rendez-nous notre Vénus hottentote>>', *Le Figaro* 10 August 1995, Almut Hielscher, 'Geister des Sturms', *Der Spiegel* (8/1996) 19 February 1996; Jilyan Pitman, 'Equal beyond grave on Robben Island', *Weekend Argus* 25 January 1997.



generally remained silent when confronted with proof of 'Hottentot' blood. Consequently I have read with keen interest what other people have been writing about my ancestor whom I share with so many other fellow South Africans.

What has struck me...

Perhaps most surprising of all is the total disregard generally - even now - for the latter part of **Krotoa's** life, her legacy and her progeny. Given Afrikanerdom's general reluctance to acknowledge collectively its racially hybrid origins, it is perhaps not surprising that the existing written record of **Krotoa's** life has never been consulted too vigorously - even now. Now, newly-entrenched *post-apartheid* intelligentsia appear to be equally reluctant to explore existing records even to the point of minimalising and ignoring verifiable and documentable ancestral claims on the part of a great many 'white-looking' South Africans. Curiously, no new primary research has been done by any of the women mentioned above. Nowadays the colonisers' records and the records of their legal successors are merely referred to selectively. Reliance is placed solely on limited published (and faulty) sources by a few historians of yore and *their* interpretations. There is also a trend to even dismiss the records out of hand. Sadly, there appears to be no attempts to exhaust available records in order to allow for a more complete set of facts that make for greater interpretation. There is no healthy sense of enquiry to reveal what might really have happened. **Yvette Abrahams's** attempts to justify 'speculative history', for example, makes greater sense and provides more scope had she not stunted her initial scientific enquiry. Each of these writers and interpreters have been intent on first pushing a favourite theory and then proceeding to select only some of the available facts to support this theory. Questionable assumptions and conclusions are being contained by ideology.

But who has the most authority to evaluate **Krotoa**? Women? Feminists? Lesbians? Gays? Men? Academics? More 'Khoes/San-looking' or Khoes/San-descended or 'Brown' women? 'African-Americans'? 'Blacks'? 'Afrikaners'? Her own direct descendants? Or just anybody who really would like to know as much as possible about her? Who determines authenticity in this instance? Who are the keepers of the Ark? Stripped of their political - I use this term in the broadest sense possible - agendas, the latest writings and interpretations all reveal concerted efforts to silence continuously **Krotoa** herself. Yes, **Krotoa** still remains kept "in a kind of custody".¹⁹

¹⁹ **Hans Petersen** uses the term *quasi in arrest zu sitzen* in his original manuscripts [Royal Library, Copenhagen: Manuscript NKS 388, 4to.]. The phrase "in a kind of custody" derives from *Adventure at the Cape of Good Hope in December 1672*, by **Jan Pietersz: Cortemünde** [**Hans Petersen** af Kerteminde] (transcribed and edited from the original manuscript in the Royal Library, Copenhagen by Henning Henningsen & translated & annotated with additional material by Douglas & Vera Varley) Cape Town (Friends of the S.A. Library) 1962, p. 4.



When venturing into the field of who-speaks-for-**Eva** and challenging these voices, spurious arguments begin to emerge, such as:

- Racist and exclusivist arguments that 'whites' should take a back place to 'non-white' or 'black' historians who have been denied accessibility, not just to primary records, but to writing up history itself;
- Sexist arguments that men, perhaps - just maybe - with the exception of gays, are less equipped than women to comment on girls' stuff;
- **Eva's** descendants were assimilated into the 'white' community thus disqualifying her white-looking descendants' right to claim Khoen, San or 'African' heritage in the 'New' South Africa;
- 'Afrikaners', through their descent from **Eva** - which has yet to be acknowledged by themselves collectively in any tangible form - can or cannot now 'negotiate' or renegotiate their right to be 'African' ...;
- Thanks to the end of apartheid, only now are any descendants of **Eva** becoming vocal
- Public and other records (and consequently primary research thereof) are colonially-tarnished, untrustworthy and should be rejected out of hand - therefore one is justified rather to interpret freely.

Surely it is incumbent on historians, researchers and academics in general - irrespective of all the '-isms' to exhaust the written record, even if we decide beforehand that these records cannot be accepted uncritically? One thing is very clear - most historians and academics shy away from unearthing new material or doing primary research. Why? Invariably:

- they are too lazy - primary research is much too time-consuming and frustrating;
- they omit certain facts - known and new facts do not suit their political agendas;
- they are not competent to access, understand or interpret these records (17th century Dutch, Danish, German etc & 17th century handwriting)
- their knowledge of the VOC-period is disturbingly shallow;
- *clichéd* and trendy academic constructs are preferred at the expense of trying to establish a larger empirical and scientific understanding.

The result? The politically expedient perpetration and perpetuation of factual errors: **Krotoa** rehashed *ad nauseam*.

Getting the facts wrong...

Candy Malherbe concedes from the very start of her biography on **Krotoa** that she has left many questions unanswered and these gaps need to be filled by others in future. It is her biography, however, that has become the basis of most of what has been subsequently written about **Eva Meerhoff**. **Yvette Abrahams** is quick to note that within the tradition of empiricist history, she could not hope to improve **Malherbe's** work. The end result: where there are factual errors, these have been perpetuated. A glaring example would be **Malherbe's** observation that **Wagenaer** [*sic*] was commander at the Cape at the time of **Eva's** death and responsible for her obituary. How can any historian researching this period not know that **Wagenaer** had already moved on in 1666 and that up to the time of **Eva's** death in 1674, there had been three commanders, one governor and two acting commanders that all



directly impinged on **Eva's** life? This misinformation, unfortunately is evident in most of the writings on **Eva** that follow **Malherbe's** biography. **Christina Landman**, for example, persists with this idea when always harking back to "**Wagenaer's** vilification of **Krotoa**".

Julia Wells, in attempts to prove **Krotoa's** 'concubinage' with **Van Riebeeck**, makes the amazing assumption that **Van Riebeeck's** niece, **Elisabeth van Opdorp** never left the Cape and became foster mother to her children. Had she read the record properly - even just published sources - she would have established that **Elisabeth van Opdorp** was not married to **Jan** [*sic*] **Reijnertz**, but to the Company official **Jacob Reyniers** - and left the Cape together with her husband **Jacob** on 24 January 1654! It was the free-burgher **Jan Reyniersz**: and his wife **Lijsbeth Jans**: - and not **Elisabeth van Opdorp** - that took charge of the confiscated **Meerhoff** children in 1669. **Carli Coetzee** has her own spelling for **Eva's** indigenous name: **Krotöa** (as found in the original Dutch of the Company Journal) has metamorphasised into **Krotoä**. She assumes, incorrectly, that **Eva's** children by **Meerhoff** "grew up as part of Cape Dutch society becoming the founding members of many" - what she terms - "Afrikaner" families. We only have documentary proof of her daughter's descendants - many of whom are not necessarily self-identified Afrikaners.

Artistic licence versus historical accuracy

Artists are free to create. But how do we assess artists who create *at the same time* claiming historical accuracy? Is this not dishonest and misleading? **Karen Press** tells her readers that **Krotoa's** story as recounted by her the author, is a "true story" ... In her poem **Krotoa's Story** she fictionalises **Eva's** story even further by even giving her historically non-existent relatives. We are told that she is the daughter of "**Maqona**"²⁰ and the sister of "**nGai**". Curiously **Antoinette Pienaar** has subverted the artistic licence of **Karen Press** by re-interpreting the interpretation. Is this what really riles **Carli Coetzee** who, quite happy to generalise, sees **Pienaar's** appropriation of **Krotoa** as an expression of "Afrikaners" trying to renegotiate their *African-ness*? The programme to **Pienaar's** one-woman stage piece explains her point of departure when upstaging **Eva**.

"KROTOA ... NOW

This adaptation is not a purely factual account of **Krotoa's** history, rather an attempt to project a liberal and poetic interpretation of **Krotoa** the woman. **Antoinette's** own intense involvement and identification with **Krotoa** and her daughter, **Pieterella**, inspired by the poem "**Krotoa's Story**" by **Karen Press**, was a key to the narrative style of the production.

²⁰ The name is too similar to **Maqoma** not to be coincidental or to solicit reaction. (see Harriet Deacon's biography of this Xhosa chief in *The Essential Robben Island*, pp. 40-43). Are we as readers subconsciously conditioned to think that the aboriginal Khoena were never subjugated but merely an 'extension' of the Nguni or subject to a Xhosa hegemony on South Africa's history? A Robben Island ferry is now named after this Xhosa chief.



It is a dramatisation of internalised conflicts and **Krotoa's** experience of the confrontation between diverse culture and values. The theme of reconciliation between cultures is vocally reflected in the use of both Afrikaans and English.

In this drama with music, the story of **Krotoa** is told by her eldest daughter, **Pieterella**."

Pienaar's respect for the historical record goes further:

"Oor die kritiek dat die solo-stuk nie histories korrek is nie, sê sy: "Dis my interpretasie van haar, nie 'n geskiedenisles nie. Daar bestaan geen ware rekords [sic] van Krotoa nie, net 'n storie wat oor en oor vertel is en telkens 'n nuwe stertjie bygekry het. Hierdie is my stertjie." ²¹

Absolving Krotoa begets self-absolution

Carli Coetzee imagines that **Krotoa's** "'blood' is now claimed by those whose ancestors denied any relation with her ancestors". How do we know whether any of our-my-your-their ancestors denied any relation with **Eva's** ancestors? **Coetzee** goes further: constructing **Eva** as "onse ma necessitates amnesia about how and why this mother of the Afrikaner nation came to be forgotten; through remembering her now, these forgetful children hope to gain a claim to an African identity". She assumes, unrealistically, that **Pienaar's** audience and 'Afrikaners' in general are no longer forgetful. Her only other 'proof' of this perceived phenomenon is her following patronising assumption:

"And in amateur [sic] genealogical circles white [sic] people compete to discover that they are descended from **Krotoa** [sic], the "stammoeder" (founding mother) of the Afrikaner [sic]."

Coetzee does not allow for affirmation and discovery. Grateful descendants, who are mindful of the tragedy surrounding their aboriginal ancestor, are not allowed to acknowledge this historical reality. Even worse: their biological and genealogical descent, which is rightfully (or wrongfully) theirs, is denied them:

"Claiming **Krotoa** [sic] as the foremother who will make everything better because all will be forgiven risks distorting the significance of her life. Better it is to remember her, as Yvette Abrahams does in her recent piece in Kronos, as the mother of conflict, rather than unity. Better to remember that her silence is not a sign of forgiveness."

What is the significance of **Eva's** life? **Coetzee** does not tell us. Who has the monopoly on the significance of her life? "Her silence"? What does this mean? How do we know whether **Eva** - or whomever else - is unwilling to forgive?

²¹ Schalk Schoombie (Kalklig), 'Altyd aan die speel', *De Kat* Junie 1995.



The *Khoe-sanitation* of Krotoa - ‘Outing’ post-apartheid Krotoa-descendants ...

The resurgence in Khoisan awareness, in which the writer himself has been actively involved, has resulted in yet another twist to **Eva Meerhoff’s** legacy. A few of **Eva’s** direct descendants - albeit white-looking or white-classified (officially or not) - have been affirming their aboriginal ancestry long before the abolition of apartheid. Now, uninformed contemporary commentators are apt to assume, wrongly, that claiming descent from **Eva Meerhoff** can only be a latter-day, post-apartheid aftermath. For example visiting Dutch historian, **Andrea Kieskamp**, had the following to say at the University of the Western Cape’s international conference *Khoisan Identities and Cultural Heritage* held at Cape Town 12-16 July 1997:

“Today, **Van Riebeeck** is not the ‘good guy’ who brought civilisation to a heathenish country. Having Khoikhoi ancestors is no longer a taboo. **Mansell Upham**, spokesperson for the Griqua National Conference, even claims to be a direct descendant of **Krotoa**, the young interpreter of commander **van Riebeeck** and the first Khoikhoi woman to live amongst the Dutch at the Cape. The colonists gave the girl a Christian name: **Eva**.”

At a meeting of the Genealogical Society of SA held at the Genealogical Institute of SA at Stellenbosch (8 August 1998), Dr **Hans Heese** noted ironically that at the same International Khoisan Conference, there were only two delegates having proven documentable descent from a Khoi woman in the 17th century ... both were so-called ‘whites’ - himself and the writer of this article. The first ever participation of people of Khoe/San descent (and their representatives) at an international conference of this nature solicited questionable reservations in the academic world, however, such as that made by **Gerald Klinghart**:²²

“The extensive changes in South Africa since 1994 have created new opportunities for redressing past injustices. Some Khoisan descendants have begun asserting forms of cultural identity based on idealized images of the past that seem to owe more to trends in Western scholarship than to documentary evidence ...”

At a gathering of Khoesan people at the SA National Gallery, another academic noted the following:

“Claims to propriety over KhoiSan bodies and the ‘emotional reserves’ of the San genocide were made by representatives of a variety of KhoiSan groups including the Griqua, the Brown Movement, and the militant Coloured Nationalist Kleurling Weerstandbeweging (KWB). The biological essentialism of some of these groups elided the historical fact that many of the people referring to themselves as Brown, Coloured, and Griqua are in fact [*sic*] of slave-European-African [*sic*]-Khoi-San ancestry. However, rather than recognizing this mixed ancestry and cultural hybridity, many KhoiSan activists claimed a ‘pure’ KhoiSan identity based on notions of biological and cultural continuity. Others did not deny their mixed ancestry but asserted biologically based claims to KhoiSan identity to gain custodianship over the KhoiSan body and collective memory. For example, even though he

²² Gerald Klinghardt, ‘Khoisan ‘97’, *Muse*, vol. II, nos. 6/7 June/July 1997.



had been classified white under apartheid, **Mansel [sic] Upham**, the Griqua National Conference's legal representative, insisted upon making public his claims of genealogical links to a founding Khoi ancestress, **Krotoa [sic] (Eva)**.²³

Carli Coetzee's views on hybridity are quite different:

"The admission of, or claim to, hybrid identity and Khoikhoi blood can have a conservative impulse: it risks forgetting the conflict and destruction involved in the mix."

This brings us to **Eva** as traitor and also generic ancestor to modern-day re-invented Khoikhoi. **Beverly Mitchell** and **Yvette Abrahams** are adamant that **Eva Meerhoff's** legacy begins and ends with the Khoisan. **Abrahams** has her own mystical views on **Eva Meerhoff** as a Khoisan ancestor of the Khoisan people:

"It may be thought disrespectful to delve in the personal affairs of Khoisan ancestors. I do not think so. We can only value the lives of our ancestors when we have full realization of what they were up against. Their achievements must be measured against the circumstances of their lives. I have found it more disturbing to think of **Eva** as a 'woman between'... I cannot see **Eva** as 'a woman between'. She was most certainly a Khoisan woman, and one whose life was inseparable from the fate of her people."

Creolising Eva

Frances Karttunen accepts the creolisation of **Eva Meerhoff** in much the same way the descendants of **Pocahontas** and **Doña Marina** were taken up into the 'white' cultures of Spain / Mexico and England / New England:

"Eight years after their abandonment, two of her children were taken by a friend of their father to Mauritius, where one of them, **Petronella**, made a rather splendid marriage with a well-to-do Dutchman. Of their eight children they named one **Eva** for her grandmother, and eventually they brought young **Eva** and her siblings back to the Cape where her grandmother's sad story had begun and ended. No matter what the attitude of the godly residents of the Cape colony toward her mother and no matter what fearful memories from childhood remained with her, **Petronella Zaijman [sic]** had found it in her heart to create a new **Eva** and bring her up Dutch."²⁴

Does anybody out there care about Krotoa herself?

What then is new about **Krotoa**? What have historians and researchers failed to unearth up to now? Why is there a limited, selective culture of enquiry? Why has the following, for example not been done to any great extent?

²³ Steven Robins, 'Silence in my father's house: memory, nationalism, and narratives of the body', *Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa* (Sarah Nuttall & Carli Coetzee (eds.)), p. 134.

²⁴ Frances Karttunen, *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors*, p. 309.



- attempts to identify all her children and even their descendants
- careful research, transcriptions and interpretations of relevant public records spanning her lifetime
- a micro-historical study of the colonial community and the individuals that interacted with her directly or indirectly?

The need for a reconstructed biography

For a period of almost 35 years I have:

- attempted to identify all her children
- transcribed the church records during her lifetime
- scoured existing Company records for any signs of evidence
- collated all available published references on **Krotoa**
- spoken publicly about **Krotoa** in order to raise public awareness
- looked at the colonial community on an individual basis
- contextualised **Krotoa's** life in terms of the growing anti-Khoe feelings among the VOC and the colonial community
- traced her descendants
- started already in 1977 - not as an attempt to re-affirm Afrikanerdom

Even now I am hesitant to codify my findings: I owe it to **Krotoa's** memory as my ancestor and in terms of how I perceive the need for an open-ended definition of truth. The intention is to bring out a reconstructed biography that will address more fully the documentable life of **Krotoa**. Artists and ideologists remain at liberty to invent her further. At least we might then be better equipped to determine how serious we ought to take them and what credence we should give to their fantasies. Can we agree with **Frances Mossiker's** dismissal of the historic **Pocahontas**?:

“But the Powhatan princess was not to be confined within genealogical links, nor could the First Families of Virginia exercise rights of exclusivity over her. She has escaped into legend.”²⁵

Or can we agree with **Michael Pye**, novelist and author of a biographical novel on New York's first recorded whore:

“... conjuring out of other people's generalities ... a version ... she left no trace ... so she is available to be invented ... I have invented her in this book which is dangerous. If she isn't satisfied with the flesh I've found for her, I'll hear ...”²⁶

I do not think so.

For **Krotoa's** sake, why should we let her escape into legend? For **Eva's** sake, why should she be made available to be invented?

²⁵ Frances Mossiker, *Pocahontas: The Life and Legend*, Da Capo Press, New York 1996 (originally published 1976).

²⁶ *The Drowning Room* (Granta Books, London 1995).



Meanwhile, I shall exercise my inalienable right to *affirm* my aboriginality through my lineal ancestor: **Eva Meerhoff**, born **Krotoa**.

Who were the children of Eva Meerhoff?

Although there has been much speculative and questionable writing recently on **Eva Meerhoff**, little primary research has been undertaken to correct many of the existing inaccuracies in print. The baptisms of 3 of the 8 children have been found in the Cape's first baptismal register which commences 23 August 1665. Records of baptisms prior to 1652 onwards have not necessarily all been preserved.

- (1) **Jacobus** born Cape of Good Hope *c.* 1661; dies at sea en route from Mauritius 1687
- (2) **Pieterella** born Cape of Good Hope *ante* 16 November 1662; dies at the Cape of Good Hope; marries **Daniel Zaaijman** (from Vlissingen [Flushing])
- (3) Child who dies in infancy (name unknown never baptised) born *c.* 1664
- (4) **Salomon** born Robben Island; baptised Cape of Good Hope 12 September 1666; dies young Mauritius
- (5) Child born Robben Island who dies in infancy (name unknown never baptised) born *c.* 1668
- (6) **Jeronimus** born Robben Island; baptised Cape of Good Hope 23 November 1670;
- (7) Child who dies in infancy (name unknown never baptised) born *c.* 1672
- (8) **Anthonij** born Robben Island 1672; baptised Cape of Good Hope 6 August 1673; still alive at the Cape of Good Hope in 1712; dies 1713 (smallpox epidemic)

