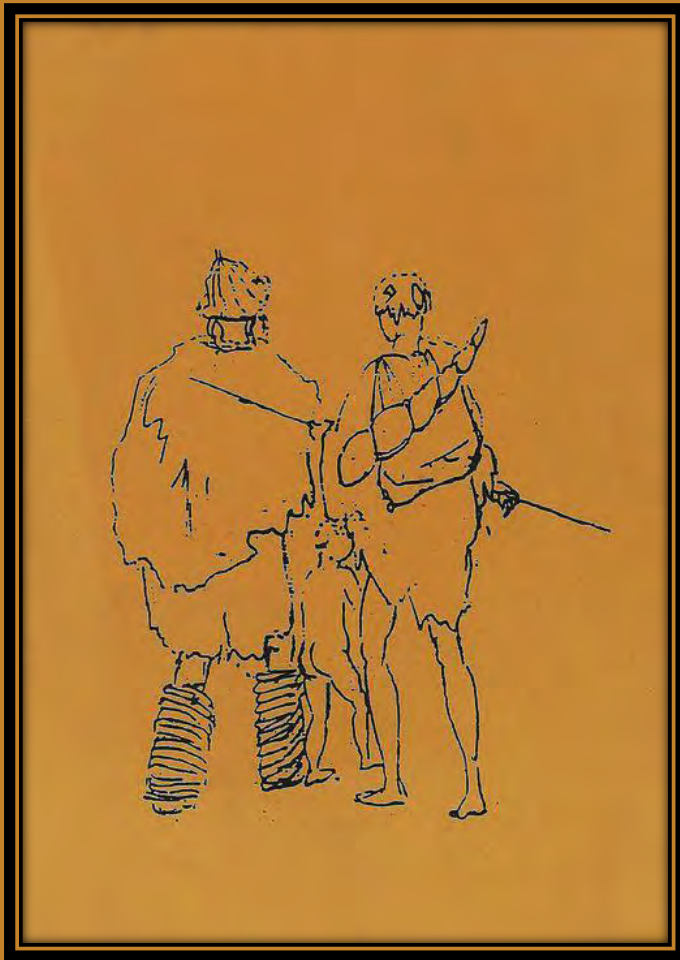


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## In Memoriam: Florida

Mythologizing the  
'Hottentot' *practice* of  
infanticide -  
Dutch colonial  
intervention & the  
*rooting out* of Cape  
aboriginal custom

# Uprooted Lives

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*Biographical Excursions into the lives of the Cape of Good Hope's Earliest  
Colonial Inhabitants*

Mansell G Upham

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

**Mansell G Upham**

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*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***

**S**ince 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 indigenouness 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. Böeseken'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 Böeseken 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-eurafrican' and then some ...:

the Goringhaicona:

**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 16<sup>th</sup> century has hitherto been unearthed. The



18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have been more accessible to researchers and historians especially in view of the more legible and easier-to-read records. The 17<sup>th</sup> 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 (1955-2004)** & **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 trans-littoral 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*<sup>1</sup>, 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*.

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,

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<sup>1</sup> *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'].





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 their 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 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 Memoriam:

# Florida

(born 23 January 1669 – died April 1669)

**Mythologizing the ‘Hottentot’ *practice* of infanticide -**  
Dutch colonial intervention & the *rooting out* of Cape aboriginal custom

**Mansell George Upham**  
(1<sup>st</sup> published Cape Town 2001, updated Tokyo, September 2013)

“May Africa dread thy laws, O Netherlands, and thy name,  
ordained by fate to tame the nations”.  
**Daniel Heinsius (1700)**<sup>1</sup>

**O**n 24 January 1669 some Dutch women on ‘walk about’ amongst the dunes some distance away from the *Fort de Goede Hoop* happen on some ‘Hottentots’. These aborigines inform the ambulant female ‘sea dogs’<sup>2</sup> that a burial of one of their deceased women has just taken place. The woman had died in childbirth the day before. In accordance with *their* customs, the deceased mother’s surviving infant - a girl - is also being buried alive together with her mother.

Culturally challenged, outraged and mortified, these Dutch women - defying aboriginal custom and tradition - open up the grave and ‘rescue’ the infant. How the Goringhaicona react, we are not informed. The impounded child - now expediently transformed into an ‘orphan’<sup>3</sup> and a ‘foundling’<sup>4</sup> - is placed in ‘safekeeping’, adopted, and even prematurely indentured. In an ultimate act of usurpation, the infant is baptised with the peculiar name of **Florida**. The name adopted is Portuguese and translated means ‘adorned with flowers’. Notwithstanding this transcultural ‘hot pursuit’, Florida dies two months later. Her cause of death remains unknown.

This article explores both the cursory, incidental, selective, confusing, hearsay, clichéd and plagiarized commentary by early visitor-writers to the Cape of Good Hope on Florida’s ‘forced removal’, but also the people and events surrounding this bizarre incident. This decisive, even catastrophic, event generally escapes the specific notice of historians and academics.<sup>5</sup> By further researching primary or original records and re-evaluating published sources, more details of this noteworthy collision of cultures have emerged. Hopefully, this enhances any understanding of what really happened. The article also investigates the extent that this **singular** incident came to be held as a ‘universal truth’ and stereotype for burial practices (including infanticide) for **all** Khoe / San peoples. This in turn served to further alienate these people from being properly considered an integral part of the comity of nations. We are also confronted with startling evidence connecting this incident to the tragic breakdown of the (in)famous



**Widow Pieter Meerhoff *alias* Krotoa, baptised Eva (c. 1643-1674)** whom the Dutch, in an unprecedented move, banish - without trial - to Robben Island.<sup>6</sup>

Krotoa (pronounced *Krotwa*) (c. 1643-1674) - Cape of Good Hope aboriginal woman of the Goringhaicona clan born on Robben Island. Reared by 1st Dutch commander Jan van Riebeeck and utilised by the Dutch as interpreter, envoy, trader, guide, cultural broker, mediator, agent & 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 VOC surgeon & superintendent of Robben Island, Copenhagen-born Pieter Meerhoff (killed 1667/8) at Antongil Bay, Madagascar while on a slave trading expedition). As widow, falls into disgrace with Dutch authorities who disapprove of her drinking, sexual & native habits. Detained & 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.



## The exhumation

We first learn of Florida's retrieval in the Company Journal (24 January 1669):<sup>7</sup>

"Yesterday afternoon some Cape ladies, whilst taking a walk towards the downs where a number of Hottentoots ordinarily live, were told that the latter had buried a woman who had been delivered of a child the previous afternoon and died shortly afterwards, and that with her, they had buried the living babe, after having put it into a bag, covering it with earth as usual. Thereupon the women, at once making common cause against the Hottentoots, opened the grave as quickly as possible, and took out of it the little child still alive; forsooth, a dreadful law by which the living may be cast with the dead into one pit together without mercy (*sonder pexatie*)".

The colonial historian **George MacCall Theal** makes a brief mention of the incident. He is silent, however, about the identity, gender and fate of Florida. His description is a poor retelling of the Journal entry and the single incident is exaggerated into a general 'Hottentot' practice:<sup>8</sup>

"There is in the journal ... a notice of a cruel custom prevalent among the Hottentots. These people, unlike some other African races, did not expose their dead, but buried them in a cavity in the ground that they could find. When the mother of a helpless infant died, the living child was buried with its parent, because no one would be at the trouble of nourishing it, and this was the customary method of ending its existence. Some Dutch women happened one afternoon to observe a party of Hottentots working in the ground, and were attracted by curiosity to the spot. They found that a corpse had been thrust into an excavation made by some wild animal, and that an infant was about to be placed with it. The women were shocked at such barbarity, but they could not prevail upon any of the Hottentots to rescue the child. No one, however objected to their taking it themselves, as they seemed so interested in its fate, and with a view of saving its life they carried it home with them".

The indigenes living close to the fort were initially a motley throng of detribalised *Quena* known as the Goringhaicona (Watermans) and an apparent offshoot of the Goringhaiqua (Caepmans):<sup>9</sup>

*"The Goringhaiconas subsist in a great measure by begging and stealing. – Among this ugly Hottentoo race, there is yet another sort called Goringhaicona, whose chief or captain, named Herry, has been dead for the last three years; these we have daily in our sight and about our ears, within and without the fort, as they possess no cattle whatever, but are strandloopers, living by fishing from the rocks. They were at first, on my arrival [1662], not more than 30 in number, but they have since procured some addition to their numbers from similar rabble out of the interior, and they now constitute a gang, including women and children, of 70, 80, or more. They make shift for themselves by night close by, in little hovels in the sand hills; in the day time, however, you may see some of the sluggards (*luyaerts*) helping to scour, wash, chop wood, fetch water, or herd sheep for our burgers, or boiling a pot of rice for some of the soldiers; but they will never set hand to any work, or put one foot before the other, until you have promised to give them a good quantity of tobacco or food, or drink. Others of the lazy crew, (who are much worse still, and are not to be induced to perform any work whatever,) live by begging, or seek a subsistence by stealing and robbing on the common highways, particularly when they see these frequented by any novices of ships from Europe".*

As the colony began to expand territorially, more and more detribalised indigenes from neighbouring clans swelled their ranks so that by 1672 up to 30 of their men could be put to work by the Dutch:<sup>10</sup>







"The Governor engaged 30 Hottentots, who generally loiter about the fort in idleness, to wheel earth for the new fort, on condition of receiving 2 good meals of rice daily, together with a *sopie* [dram] and a piece of tobacco; these Africans undertook the work with great eagerness".

These folk were very likely encamped at what today has recently been renamed *Heritage Square*. Originally known in the early colonial period as *Hottentot Plein*, this appropriated area was later renamed *Boeren Plein* and in the more recent past again renamed *Van Riebeeck Plein*.



## Who were these Cape ladies who 'rescued' the child on that fatal day?

Thanks to the writings of **Pieter de Neyn (1643-?)**, we know who the women are that intercept Florida's funeral. De Neyn, a man of many talents and the Cape's first poet, is sent to the Cape in 1672 as its first legally qualified prosecuting officer (fiscal). He is a doctor of law. He arrives on the *Gouda* (11 February 1672). During the voyage to the Cape, he is accused of private trading. He first has to have his name cleared before he can commence his official duties. After a stay of almost five years, he leaves the Cape (1674). He departs, as he had arrived, in a cloud of controversy apparently having led a life of debauchery while at the Cape. His literary legacy of poetry and travel writings reveals another side to this talented man.<sup>11</sup> He resides at the Cape at the time when Dutch - Khoe / San relations have reached an all time low. Significantly, he also holds the office of Orphan Master. De Neyn, relying on memory as his original papers had been stolen, recounts the event as follows in his work on marriage ceremonies world-wide (published 1681):<sup>12</sup>



Hebbe in dese wat wijtloop'ger willen wesen, om dat mijn beschrijvingh van de Caap, die voor desen in 't inlopen binnen het gat van Texel, op mijn t'huijs-reise, beneffens mijn gehoude *Journal*, met eenige andere, voor my waardige papieren, my aldaar dief- en schelmachtigh ontstolen is, waar inne mede hadde aangeteikend, hoe de *Hottentotsche* mannen in haar jonkheid de linker kloot, of bal werden uitgesneden, hoe de vrouwen, of *Hottentottinnin*, boven haar schamelheid, (niet alle: maar wel de meeste *part* !) een lel hebben hangen, even als de kalkoenen haar snavel boven de neus, waar aan sy, gelijk de koe-beesten aan de hoornen met krabben, wanneer sy kalven, merken, op gelijke manier mede telkenen, met soo meenigen kind, so menigen krap, of lith; als mede hoedanigh geleeft werd met hoere-kinderen, welkers moeder van de vrucht in 't kraam-bed sijn overleden, hoe de selve levendigh by de moeder in 't graf werden gedompeld, waar van een nieuw-geboorte schepsel soodanigh eens door de huijs-vrouwen van voorgemelte Burgermeesters **Elbert Diemer**, ende **Wouter Mostaart**, beneffens de huis-vrouw van **Hendrik van Zuerwaarden**, namaals hertrouwt met den *Dispénsier*, ende Onder-koopman **Willem van Dieden**, ende de Weduwe van **N. Bosch**, namaals hertrouwt met den *Adistent* **Johannes Prætorius**, voor desen met my *Student* tot *Leiden* geweest sijnde, levendigh uit een graf is gehaald, ende verlost geworden, werdende dat selve kind door opgemelte vrouwen een geruimen tijd daar na,

opgevoed, tot dat het eindelijk de moeder is komen te volgen, naar dat het altoorens in de *Christelijke Kerk* sijn Doop hadde ontvangen; mitsgaders veel meer aanmerkenswaardige saken.

In order of appearance, these women - all wives of eminent free-burghers and officials and all living outside of the Fort, and consequently not without influence - are:





- **Christina Does** (from Nijmegen [Gelderland]) *alias* **Stijntje de Boerin**, wife of free-burgher **Elbert Dircx: Diemer**<sup>13</sup> (from Emmerich) and later wife of Lieutenant **Adriaen van Reede** (from Rhenen);
- **Hester Weyers: Klim** (from Lier [Antwerpen]) *alias* **Hester Jans: van Lier**, **Hester Weyers**., **Hester van Lier**, wife of free-burgher **Wouter Cornelisz: Mostert**<sup>14</sup> (from Utrecht) and later wife of free-burgher **Jan Holsmit** (from Sittard [Limburg]);
- **Margaretha / Grietje Frans Meeckhoff (1639-1682/5)** from Steenwijck [Overijssel] (wife of free-burgher **Hinrich Hinrichs: van Zuerwaerden** (from Sürwürden [Oldenburg]) and later wife of free-burgher **Willem van Dieden** (from Amsterdam); and
- **Geertruyd Meyntinghs (dies Cape 1676)** from Hasselt [Limburg] (wife of firstly, **Evert Roleemo**; secondly, the lieutenant **Wilhelm Ludwig Wiederhold** (from Enkhuizen); thirdly free-burgher **Dirk Bosch** (from Amsterdam); and lastly free-burgher **Joannes Praetorius** (from Ouddorp).



**M.E. Pretorius**, in her book *Die Geskiedenis van die Pretorius-Familie van Barkly-Oos*<sup>15</sup>, misinterprets De Neyn. While embellishing fictionally, she mistakenly claims, that the second wife of **Johannes Pretorius**, **Johanna Victor**, had also been present and that the child in question had been a boy:

“Van Johanna Victor vertel Pieter de Nuyn in sy "Lusthof der Huwelijken", hoe sy, tesame met enige ander dames uit die omgewing van Kommandeur Jacob von Borghorst, die lewe gered het van 'n hottentot-baba, toe sy nog 'n jong meisie was. In die nabyheid van die Goedehoop-fort was naamlik 'n groep hottentotte besig om 'n meid van hulle stam begrawe, wat 'n klein babatjie negalaat het; en volgens die babaarse gewoonte van die ras sou hulle die lewende kind saam met haar moeder begrawe. Mej. Victor en die ander vroue het ewewel deur mooipraat met die hottentotte verkry, dat hulle die lewe van die kleintjie spaar en sy is met hom [*sic*] terug na die Fort”.



The minister **François Valentyn (1666-1727)** who visited the Cape (1685, 1695, 1705 and 1714) when describing the Cape's aboriginal inhabitants, recounts the incident - by now already an 'urban legend', in a section entitled *Cruelty towards twins and other children, and concerning the aged and infirm*. Parts of his description are copied directly from De Neyn:<sup>16</sup>



"If a woman bears twin girls, they let only the first-born live, but if they are a son and a daughter they keep the son, but take the daughter wrapped in a little skin out into the open plain or lay her down in a bush, where she soon dies of cold and hunger (unless a wild beast first devours her). And if the mother died in childbirth, they bury the living child with the dead mother in one and the same grave, binding it on her lap, and throw some earth over them and trample it well down, after which they cover them with large stones against the wild beasts. For this they give no other reason than, that since the mother is dead, no one can rear the child. About 1680 [*sic*] such a child was taken from the grave still alive by some Dutch women, and brought up, among whom were the wives of **Diemer**, **Mostaart**, and others".

### François Valentyn (1666-1727)

Valentyn later returns to this incident:<sup>17</sup>

We have already mentioned how at times some of the Hottentots have been for fully 20 years and more with the Dutch, dressing in Dutch clothing, but have then gone back to their own people; but now and then in certain circumstances some of the children of these Hottentots have been baptised here, as especially a certain child whom they had buried alive with its dead mother, and whom the wives of **Elmer** [*sic*] **Diemer**, **Wouter Mostaart**, **Hendrik van Suurwaarden** (later married to the Dispensier **Willem van Dieden**, and the widow of **N. Bosch** (afterwards remarried to the Assistant **Joannes Prætorius**) took out of this grave and had it baptised, and reared it for some time until it died.

Valentyn brings the incident dramatically forward to 1680 instead of the original 1669.<sup>18</sup> By the time Valentyn visits the Cape for the first and second time (in 1685 and 1695 respectively), two of the women he mentions are still been around to claim their piece of the action. These are **Stijntje de Boerin** and **Hester Weyers**. The latter leaves the Cape with her second husband **Jan Holsmit** (from Sittard) in 1698. **Stijntje de Boerin**, who of all these women survives the longest at the Cape, remarries (6 April 1698) the lieutenant **Adriaen van Reede** and dies at the Cape (1703).<sup>19</sup>

### Florida is indentured

We learn more about the confiscated Florida's fate in the Minutes (*Notules*) of the Cape Church Council (1 March 1669)<sup>20</sup>:



[Hottentotsche vondeling]. Den 1 Maert [1669] is mede goetgevonden, een Hottentotsch kindt, door enige vrouwen uyt het zant, daer het met het dode lichaam van sijn moeder begraven was, gehaelt, aen **Hendr.[ick] Reynsz.**, op sijn eigen versoek toe gestaen, met kennisse van den E.[dele] H[ee]r **Jacob Borchhorst**, met die voorwaerde, dat hij hetselve christelick en deughdelick na sijn vermogen sal opvoeden, en den dienst daervan, als het tot sijne jaren sal gekomen zijn, voor de opvoedinge gebruycken, ter tijt toe het sal huywbaer zijn, ofte sal komen te trouwen, dit alles onder die reserve, dat bijaldien hij ofte de sijne dese voorwaerde niet na en komen, de Dioconen hetselve weder sullen na sigh trecken. [Later bijgevoegd: welck voorn.[oemde] Kindt, na den tijt van twe of drie maenden is gestorven].

At the request of the free-woodcutter (*vrij timmerman*) **Hendrick Reynsz: Gulix (1639-1687)** (from Dirksland), the 'foundling' is adopted. Had his wife, **Barbara (Barbertje) Geems (1627-1688)** been nursing the child from the time of exhumation?

From Amsterdam, **Barbara Geems** has been the wife of the Company's master gardener **Jacob Hubertsen van Rosendael** (from Leiden). He arrives at the Cape (1660). She joins her husband at the Cape (1661) with her stepdaughter, **Neeltje Jacobs: Rosendael** and her two daughters, **Sara** and **Maria**. She is widowed (1662) after giving birth to a posthumous child **Machteltje**. Impoverished, she soon remarries (2 September 1663) **Gulix**, by whom, if we go by the baptismal register, she has two more children: **Helena** (*alias Helena Reijnekes*; **Helena Gulix** and **Leen de Schout**)<sup>21</sup> and **Leendert**.

With the consent of commander **Jacob Borghorst**, Reynsz and his wife are allowed by the Cape Church Council to bring up the child on condition that she be brought up Christian and in return for her upbringing, the child can remain in their service until she becomes nubile or married. Failure to abide by these conditions, responsibility for the infant would revert to the Diaconate. On 3 March 1669, Hendrik Reynsz and Barbara Geems take the unprecedented step of baptising the infant with the peculiar name of **Florida**. This ceremony was the second baptism at the Cape of an aborigine. Bedecked with flowers, was this baptismal ceremony a culturally assertive statement? <sup>22</sup>

*Den 3 Maert An.[no] 1669 een Hottentotsch kindt door goedkaer van de Com.[pagnie] en kerckenraet van Hend.[rik] Reijnsche tot opvoedinge als zyn eigen aen genemen wiert genaemt Florida tot getuygen stonde Hendrick Reijnsche en syn huysvrouw - doot.*

The child appears to have died soon after – two or three months later (ie April or May 1669). The death is recorded in a marginalised note in both the *Notules* and the Cape's first baptismal register. The cause of death is never stated.

### Florida's legacy:

*... debilitating that Native Heat which powerfully prompts them to Propagation ...  
or  
... verily a mirror for the Christians ... ?*

This particular incident has been perpetuated by numerous successive writers about the Cape of Good Hope and its indigenous inhabitants thereby becoming a legend. These writers, capitalizing on sensation, invariably ape each other. Few, when generalizing about the indigenes, took the trouble or were able to look beyond the local inhabitants. These were detribalized dregs and Khoe / San remnants found only at



Table Bay. Few appear to have investigated personally anything more about the customs and traditions of the indigenous inhabitants further inland.

**Johann Schreyer**, resident surgeon at the Cape for the period (1668-1675) is actually on the scene at the time Florida is brought in. In his account of the Cape of Good Hope, he refers to this incident involving Florida:<sup>23</sup>

“Chap. 17. When a woman gives birth, and thereafter dies, the child is buried alive with the dead mother. This also is done when twins are born, that for fear of the trouble they hastily bury one child and let the other live”.

Schreyer has a rare opportunity to explore the incident. Instead, he chooses to generalize the incident as a common practice amongst the indigenous peoples of the Cape. He also is strategically placed to write about the ‘Hottentot’ suicide **Zara** (1671). It was he who does her autopsy.<sup>24</sup> Instead, he chooses to concentrate on sensational generalisations designed to keep his readers entertained.



Jan van Neck's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Frederick Ruysch*, 1683

One year after the fatal incident involving Florida, the very observant Norwegian **Frederick Andersen Bolling**<sup>25</sup>, who visits the Cape (20 March 1670 -1 April 1670), has the following to say:<sup>26</sup>

“When any of them [‘Hottentots’] dies, they bury him entirely naked, and the priest again comes with his fire and half moon, whereby he bears witness, that the dead man lived properly in his marriage. But if a woman dies, and she still has a suckling child, the child is buried alive with her, saying that a child who is still a suckling will not be cared for after the mother’s death”.

**Jan Pietersz. Cortemünde**, *alias* **Hans Petersen**, writing after his dramatic detention at the Cape (1672) when the Royal ship the *Oldenburg* stops over here and his memorable meeting with the banished **Eva Meerhoff** on Robben Island, provides possibly a more insightful, specific and alternative explanation for the ‘Hottentots’ disregarding the sanctity of life, their custom entailing live burial as opposed to exposure and their attitudes towards immorality:<sup>27</sup>

“They are so hostile to adultery that, when seized, the adulterer, without exception, is flogged to death and the adulteress is strangled. If a girl becomes pregnant and dies while giving birth, the





child is buried alive together with the mother, so hated are the adulteresses and their children in this nation - verily a mirror for the Christians”.

**Willem ten Rhyne (1647-1700)**<sup>28</sup> who visits the Cape (1673), has the following to share:<sup>29</sup>

“Chap. XXII ... The Law of Nations ... Although, being bound neither by the bonds of God nor of shame, they absolve themselves from law, yet they are often a law unto themselves, imitating by blind impulse, under the teaching of dame custom, those things which their fathers before them did. Thus, if a mother bears twins, a male and a female, by the law of their race they kill the latter in the cradle”.



### **Willem ten Rhyne (1647-1700)**

Porträt in Ten Rhijnes Buch *Dissertatio de Arthritide: Mantissa Schematica: De Acupunctura: Et Orationes Tres*, R. Chiswell, London 1683

**Christophorus Schweitzer**<sup>30</sup> visits the Cape (23 April 1676-1 May 1676). He, too, feels obliged to comment on this infanticidal tendency on the part of the ‘Hottentots’:<sup>31</sup>

“If any of the Women have two Children at one Birth, they kill the weakest, that the other may have the Breasts to himself, and grow stronger and lustier”.

**Johannes Gulielmus de Grevenbroek**<sup>32</sup>, who lives at the Cape (1684-1726) and dies there, writes extensively about the ‘Hottentots’. He mentions specifically the Florida incident maintaining the orthodox view that child neglect by the indigenes was common: <sup>33</sup>

“If a woman among them [ie the neighbouring tribes] bear twins, they rear them, giving them to the mother to be cherished and fed. In this they differ greatly from the nearer tribes and those who live among us, for their custom is, when twins are born, to make one of them, of course the girl, for they always preserve the male, and cast it with hideous cruelty to the birds and beasts to tear and rend in some thicket, or to bury it alive in the earth. The reason they allege a mother of two is unequal to the task of rearing both at the same time. If the mother dies in labour or



immediately after giving birth to a child, then, with the same cruelty as before, they bury her at once with the embryo or infant, even if alive. Here I think I ought not to pass over in silence the fact that a certain smith, who was riding twenty miles from the Cape, heard a child wailing in a tree, and not far off he found the mother to whom he gave a good hiding to teach her to love and care for her offspring ...To this I think I should add that certain European women at the Cape itself, running up just in time, dug up a little girl buried by the Africans. They raised a sum of money by subscription and hired a nurse for the child”.

**Johann Georg Bøvingh**<sup>34</sup>, who visits the Cape (1709) in an attempt to convert the heathen ‘Hottentots’, merely sanctions the theory that infanticide is sometimes the usual outcome following the birth of twins.

**Pieter Kolb(e) / Colbe**<sup>35</sup> (1706-1713)<sup>36</sup> also only remarks on the fact that in the case of twins, the killing of the female was inevitable and only in the case where both twins were male, would both infants be spared.



**Peter Kolb (1675-1726)**

**Otto Friedrich Mentzel (1709-1801)**<sup>37</sup> informs his readers that colonists would take in children often exposed. He notes sceptically, however, that this charity was not entirely from altruism since it (the infant) would then have to serve them unpaid until 25 years old he confirms the practice of infanticide in the case of twins only happening inland and no longer at the Cape.



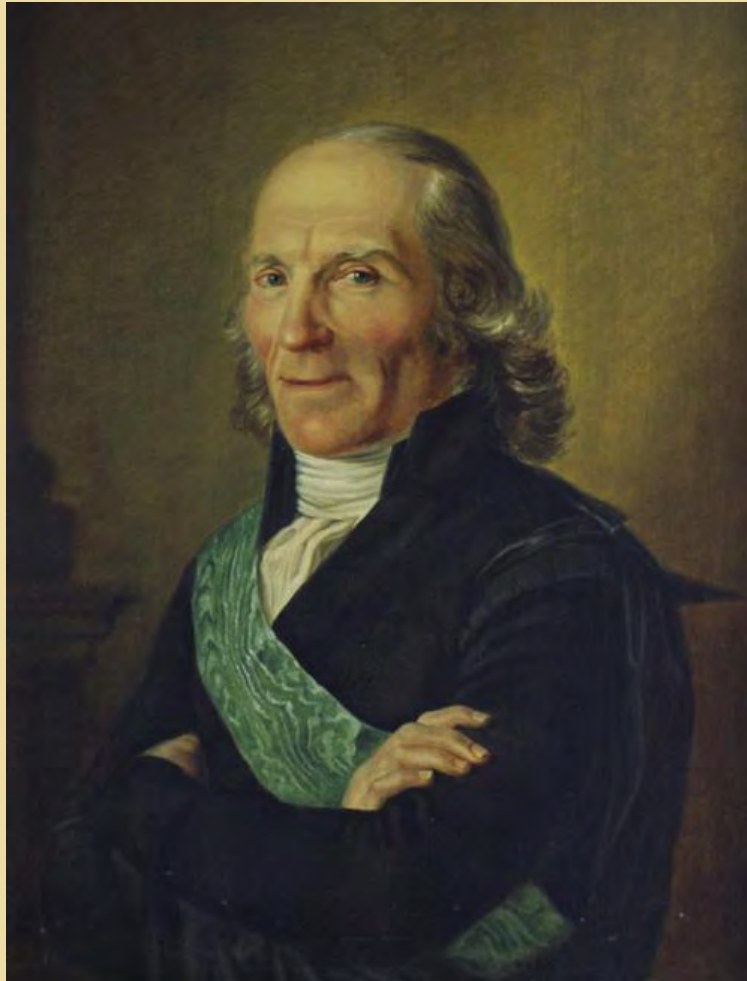


**Anders Sparrman (1772-1776)**

**Anders Sparrman (1772-1776)**<sup>38</sup> confirms that abandoned / exposed children are often taken in by colonists and echoes Mentzel's views on the ostensible altruism by colonists when indenturing these children.







**Karl Peter Thunberg (1772-1775)**

**Karl Peter Thunberg (1772-1775)**<sup>39</sup> in his writings, echoes Mentzel and Sparrman stating that infanticide is practiced sometimes in the case of an infant's mother being dead at birth and also sometimes in the case of twins being born.

**John Maxwell**<sup>40</sup> only informs his readers about infanticide being practiced in the case of twins, but not if the infants are both male. **J. Philips**<sup>41</sup>, drawing heavily on Kolbe echoes the statement that infanticide is practised in the event of twins, but not if both were male. **C.F. Brink**<sup>42</sup> writes exactly what Philips has written. And so does **L.H. von Schomburg**.<sup>43</sup> **Simon de la Loubère**<sup>44</sup>, stopping over at the Cape (1687) mentions infanticide in the light of there being too many children:<sup>45</sup>

"They [the 'Hottentots'] kill their children when they have too many".

**John Ovington**<sup>46</sup> (1693) waxes lyrical on the 'murder' of children in the case of over-reproduction:<sup>47</sup>

"The Male Children at Eight or Ten Years of Age, are Cut in their Private Parts, and depriv'd of one of their Testicles. The same is likewise done at *Cape Comoron*, for increasing their Valour and Activity. But here, I believe upon another Score, viz. For prevention of a too Luxuriant Increase by Generation; because when their Children Increase beyond their Desires, and the just number which they design, to prevent a heavier Charge upon the Parents, they dispatch the Supernumeraries to the other World, without any Remorse for the horrid Crime, or





Consciousness of the execrable Sin of Murther, which is the Reason, I presume, of the *Hotantot's* losing part of their Virility, that they may debilitate that Native Heat, which powerfully prompts them to Propagation".

**Johan Daniel Buttner** who comes to the Cape (1712), is appointed chief surgeon and finally settles there until his death (c. 1730), reverts to the practice of infanticide in the case of twins:<sup>48</sup>

"As soon as a child is born it is covered all over in cow dung, and then rubbed with fat of sheep or ox. After this has been done they celebrate and feast and enjoy themselves. In this connection something must be said about the attitude of the Hottentots towards twins. If the twins are girls, they keep the firstborn and throw the other to the wild animals, if the twins consist of a boy and a girl, they keep the boy, but if both twins are boys, they keep both of them".

## Florida - the *hoerkind*

The various writers mentioned above do not distinguish between the practice by Cape aborigines of abandoning children and exposing such infants to the elements and another different practice, viz: burying infants alive. Taking all these confusing versions into account, perhaps it might be safe to conclude (relying on De Neyn, Bolling and Cortemünde) that the infant who comes to be baptised Florida is the unwelcome result of her mother's adulterous union. Tradition appears to have dictated that the child be buried alive with her deceased adulterous mother. The likelihood that a European fathered the child cannot be excluded.

The aboriginal position regarding alleged and actual abandonment of children is by no means cut and dried. A particularly disturbing incident, for instance, takes place (27 September 1673):<sup>49</sup>

"The Soeswas captain Claas came to make known that he had killed 2 Gonnema Hottentots, (being his enemies and ours) and offered as a slave to the Company a little boy about 12 years old, whose life he had spared in consideration of his innocence; the child was however restored to him as his prisoner. It appears from this circumstance that these barbarous Africans are accustomed to look upon the innocent with a degree of commiseration which is little regarded by many Christian potentates".

There is indeed a practice whereby the Dutch take in or 'adopt' aboriginal children, with or without parental or clan consent. We know that in some instances aboriginal children become Dutch *protegé(e)s*. Some are even taken away from the Cape.<sup>50</sup> Others are taken into Dutch households as servants.<sup>51</sup> Whatever European concern exists in terms of perceived practice of 'abandonment', is suspect. No provision is ever made for any legal or ecclesiastical protection of such children. Florida remains the *only* documented case. Is the European concern in this instance because Florida has been fathered by a white man?

Florida's situation *challenges* the Dutch culturally and morally in the extreme. Their moral tolerance is stretched to the limit. This is confirmed by two significant and emotionally charged incidents that occur soon thereafter. The indecent haste and manner in which the Dutch deal with the Company slave woman and banished convict, **Susanna van Bengale**, *alias Susanna Een Oor* (whom they torture, try and execute in that same year - 1669 - for infanticide) and the suicide of the "Dutch Hottentot" **Sara** /



**Zara** in 1671 (who at the time is likely to be pregnant with child and fathered by a European) need to be evaluated against the background of what can be termed *Florida's legacy*. These two tragic incidents are dealt with in greater detail by the author in separate articles.<sup>52</sup>

## Academics

How does one account for the general omission or ignoring of this incident by academics? Other than Theal, the only other academic reference that could be traced is that of De Wet. Florida is unnamed and termed an 'orphan'.<sup>53</sup> Failure by academics to appreciate cultural clashes as a point of departure for historical enquiry, possibly explains why Florida has yet to be better contextualised historically.

## The fall of Eva Meerhoff



At the time of Florida's confiscation (24 January 1669), the Widow **Eva Meerhoff** is accused of being a drunk, "playing the beast at night" and reverting to her native habits. A mere fifteen days after Florida's confiscation, a new Church Council is elected (8 February 1669). The council consists of the following men: the resident minister **Adriaen de Voogd**, as elders (*ouderlingen*) **Johannes Coon** and **Herman Ernst Gresnicht** (the last named replacing **Elbert Dircx: Diemer**) and the two deacons **Adriaen Wils** and **Gerrit van der Bijl** (replacing **Jan Reijniersz:** and **Gresnicht**). Immediately thereafter, the council resolves at its very first sitting to confiscate her three *Eurafrican* children. Thereafter Eva is reprimanded, but informed differently. If she does not change her ways, only then will her children be taken away from her. She flees. Does she already know about the resolution to confiscate her children? More importantly, Eva, very likely

witnesses *personally* Florida's confiscation. If not, she is undoubtedly fully up-dated about Florida's abduction. Again amongst her own kind, is she outraged by the Dutch violation of her people's customs?

That evening the Widow Meerhoff's house (the old pottery, then a make-shift abode) is sealed and her children confiscated. They are immediately placed in the temporary care of the outgoing deacon of the church, **Jan Reijniers:**, and his wife, **Lijsbeth Jans:**. This couple are considered to be ... "people of an honest and godly character" ... They also have first-hand knowledge of dealing with the local indigenes. Reyniersz:, a notorious cattle and sheep rustler, has even once before strung up the Goringhaiqua paramount chief **Gogosoa**, *alias* the 'Fat Captain' and held him hostage (4 May 1661).



In terms of the pre-emptive resolution, the Meerhoff children are to be placed in the care of **Hendrik Reynsz:** and **Barbara Geems** as from 1 March 1669 who are already safeguarding the confiscated infant **Florida**. Thus, all four “Dutch Hottentots” are to be confined to *one* family. At the same time the fiscal **Cornelis de Cretzer** is instructed to find Eva and arrest her. Two days after the confiscation of Eva’s children (10 February 1669), Eva is arrested and thrown into the *donker gat* after an abortive attempt to rescue her children the night before. On 1 March 1669, the *same* day as the decision by the church to seal Florida’s fate with Barbara Geems, Eva’s children are formally put into the care of this same woman. On 26 March 1669 their mother, the Widow Meerhoff, is banished - without trial - to Robben Island until her untimely death (29 July 1674).

During her banishment the Royal Danish ship the *Oldenburg* stops (November 1672) at Robben Island and **Hans Petersen**<sup>54</sup>, describes his meeting with what appears to him to be a “masterpiece of Nature”, Eva Meerhoff.<sup>55</sup>

“In the house of the local commander [Danish-born **Christian von Aalborg**] we also met a Hottentot woman [**Eva**] who had been born in Africa of pagan, bestial parents, but had been brought up in the Cape by a Dutch woman, so that compared with her own countrymen she now appeared to be a masterpiece of nature. She had embraced Christianity, spoke fluent Dutch, English, French and Portuguese and was conversant with the Holy Scriptures so that she was able to discuss everything with our pastor to our very great astonishment. She was much better proportioned than is generally the case with her compatriots. In short, she was most commendable being capable and well trained in all womanly crafts and married to one of the physicians serving in the Company. After the death of her husband, the noble Company allotted her 9 rixdollars monthly for her maintenance, for so long as she would remain a widow and stay virtuous. But when, after the death of her husband, she became pregnant out of wedlock and her “fountain” dried up<sup>56</sup> she was punished by being kept here **in a kind of custody**<sup>57</sup> for a certain time”

## Barbertje Geems - both whore and whoremonger

... een knap en handigh vrouwtje, en daar toe seer bequaam.<sup>58</sup>

Is **Barbara Geems** the nurse, referred to by **De Grevenbroek**, who is hired to care for **Florida** immediately after the infant’s confiscation? Considering that her daughter, **Sara Jacobs: van Rosendael** (later the wife of **Adriaen Willemsz: van Brakel**, *alias Baes Arrie* who becomes *ouderling* in 1671), is later appointed as official *vroedvrouw* (midwife), the likelihood exists that she has learned her vocation from her mother. The personal circumstances of Barbara Geems, however, are not so good. Impoverished and living off the proceeds of her bakery and also liquor sales, she and her husband are more than willing to take in the ‘abandoned’ Meerhoff orphans *at the same time* as Florida in exchange for payment for services rendered.

Barbara Geems is a known *hoer* (whore) and *pol* (whoremonger). Her nocturnal activities are exposed at the trial of the Company’s *tamboer* (drummer) **Hendrik Coerts: / Courtsz:** (from Deventer).<sup>59</sup> Her husband is considered to be one of the two laziest free-burghers in the colony. Pleading poverty, he rejoins the Company and is removed to work at the VOC’s post at Mauritius (1666). His wife and family, however, remain at the Cape. In his absence, his wife runs a brothel. He returns (1669) but permission is quickly given for him to go to Batavia. He leaves (1670). Once again his family remains behind at the Cape. He never returns.



The decision by the church council, no doubt with the blessing of the colony's most influential women, comes as a surprise (or perhaps not?) - especially in the case of the Meerhoff children. Had Florida survived, would she too have been made available for prostitution? From the trial of Hendrik Coerts: / Courtsz: we know that when Barbara Geems herself is in no position to satisfy regularly his sexual needs, she makes her female slave available to him.

As for the Meerhoff children, at least the two youngest, **Pieterella Meerhoff** and **Salomon Meerhoff** are shipped off (1677) to Mauritius as wards (servants?) to **Theuntje Bartholomeus van der Linde** and her husband, **Bartholomeus Borns** (from Waerden [Friesland]). The eldest, **Jacobus Meerhoff**, a free spirit in touch with his native side and prone to wander, is later sent to join his sister in Mauritius. Unwanted and unmourned, he dies mysteriously on the voyage back to the Cape. It is not known who looks after Eva Meerhoff's two illegitimate sons, **Jeronimus** and **Anthonij**, after her death (1674). Does Barbara Geems also take them in? Significantly, the Church Council and the authorities do not ever concern itself with these children. The records are silent. Only Anthonij appears to reach adulthood and is recorded (1712) alone and without a family as **Anthonij Meerhoff**. In all probability, he dies prematurely (1713), a victim of the smallpox epidemic.

## Paragons of virtue, upholders of Dutch civilization

During this time the Cape's commander is the immensely unpopular, and purportedly sickly and generally indisposed, **Jacob Borghorst**. He is installed (18 June 1668). He has already stopped over at the Cape (1 March 1665-22 April 1665) *en route* from the Indies to the Netherlands. The resolutions by the Council of Policy during his time as commander reveal a skeleton staff of sorts when contrasted with the membership and attendance of councils chaired by his predecessors and successors. Furthermore, there is even disarray in the burgher council as the *heemraad* **Thielman Hendricksz**: (from Utrecht) is dismissed (1669) from his position for giving the Council of Justice a piece of his mind. The removal of Thielman Hendricksz: from office undoubtedly jeopardizes whatever little favourable treatment Eva Meerhoff and her children might have got from the Dutch. **François Valentijn** wrote later of Borghorst's unpopularity:<sup>60</sup>

"The *Heeren Wagenaar* and *Van Quaalbergen* had indeed left good instructions and set good examples to *Heer Borchorst* as regards the artisans; but on his own authority, and without the knowledge of the Council he had so altered these, that he made them work by day and stand at night, by which he had made himself so hated by them that scarce any wished to remain here longer, and also during his rule he had caused very great discontent among the civil population, so that it was full time for him to depart".







Even the local aborigines dislike Borghorst intensely. This is confirmed by the visiting VOC official **Arnout van Overbeke**.<sup>61</sup> Calling Borghorst the only “monster” that he can find at the Cape, Van Overbeke states further:<sup>62</sup>

“All his quarrelsomeness came from the fact that **Quaelbergen** was still so beloved that no one was very willing to have anything to do with him. Even the Hottentots, who each year give a free-will present to the Commandeur [**Borghorst**], were fed up with him: “What sort of a Captain is that?” they said, “always Sieckum!” (that is to say sick, bad, grumpy, ugly - everything that is no good is sieckum, thus bad tobacco is “sieckum Tabak,” etc.); and that made our friend mad. He wants to get by force what in reality can be had only by affection. For that matter, he punishes himself every evening with a few glasses of spirits which one of those in his confidence brings him under cover”.

### Aernout van Overbeke

The man in Borghorst’s confidence is **Hendrik Crudop**, butler or steward (*hofmeester*) to the commander. Crudop’s meteoric rise within the ranks of the administration parallel - at least in terms of success - those of the wealthy and highly respectable **Elbert Diemer** whose career also starts out as butler and personal attendant to the commander. Crudop’s presence at the Cape requires careful monitoring as he is to play an instrumental, personal and destructive part in the initial colonial undoing of the aboriginal Khoe / San. Crudop’s wife, **Catharina de Voogd**, significantly, is sister to the resident minister, **Adriaan de Voogd**. How else do we explain the extraordinary intervention on the part of the Church Council - almost always subordinate to the VOC’s administration - and the inaction on the part of both the Council of Policy and the Council of Justice?



## Conclusion

“Authors are to be blam’d for their Wantonness and Precipitations  
in the Characters they have drawn of the Hottentots,  
whose Minds and Manners, tho’ wretched enough,  
are not so wretched as they have made ‘em”.  
**Peter Kolb(e)** (1731)

Florida’s story became a source of literary legend in terms of colonial travel-writings on the primitive, the ‘other’ and the exotic. The incident, no matter how blurred or rehashed and now almost forgotten, becomes nevertheless one of the cornerstones whereby the Khoe / San peoples become Occidentally (universally?) maligned and well-nigh dehumanized in perpetuity. It is surely opportune and imperative that the intertwined stories of **Florida** and **Eva Meerhoff** now be re-evaluated. At the time, the moral outrage is so great that the Dutch authorities ‘resolve’ the matter by dumping these children, these ‘Hottentot’ misfits, with the colony’s most notorious whore and whoremonger. Is this a copout done on the pretext of inducing moral self-upliftment on the part of Barbara Geems? Barbara Geems, it must be remembered, has been allowed to indenture Florida on condition that she bring up the girl as a Christian. Midwife, privileged tavern-keeper, storekeeper, baker and purveyor of bread to the garrison, Barbara Geems’s meteoric rise to respectability thereafter begs further scrutiny.



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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Translation of part of the verse by visiting VOC Commissioner **Daniel Heinsius** that once appeared above the entrance to the Company's hospital at the Cape. The original verse went: *Belga tuum nomen, populus fatale domandis / Horreat, et Leges Africa tuas.*

<sup>2</sup> This pejorative term is first recorded (1707) during the trial of the Huguenot **Pierre Cronjé** who is banished for shooting 2 'Hottentot' women.

<sup>3</sup> G. Con de Wet's term - see his *Die Vryliede en Vryswartes in die Kaapse Nedersetting 1657-1707*, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> *Hottentotsche vondeling*. C. Spoelstra's term - see his *Bouwstoffen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederduitsch-Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid-Afrika*, (Hollandsch Afrikaansche Uitgevers Maatschappij v/h Jacques Dusseau & Co, Amsterdam – Kaapstad 1906 & 1907), Part I, p. 259.

<sup>5</sup> Only George McCall Theal describes the incident, although somewhat inaccurately, while Dr Con de Wet merely gives a passing reference to the adoption of this 'Hottentot' "orphan" [*sic*] by a free-burgher. Both do not mention the child's name or gender and are silent about the events leading up to the child's adoption and indenture. Historians such as J.S. Marais, William Macmillan & Richard Elphick are all silent about **Florida**.

<sup>6</sup> Mansell G. Upham, 'In a Kind of Custody: For **Eva**'s sake ...who speaks for **Krotoa**?' & 'Who were the children of Eva Meerhoff?', *Capensis*, no. 4 (1998), pp. 6-14.

<sup>7</sup> H.C.V. Leibbrandt, *Précis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope: Journal*, pp. 265-266.

<sup>8</sup> George McCall Theal, *History of the Cape Colony*, p. 175.

<sup>9</sup> Zacharias Wagenaer, *Memorandum to Cornelis van Quaelbergen* 24 September 1666. [Donald Moodie, *The Record*, 291].

<sup>10</sup> *Journal* (7 October 1672).

<sup>11</sup> L.B. Odendaal, 'De Neyn, Pieter', *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol. II, p. 180.

<sup>12</sup> LUST-HOF DER HUWELYKEN, Behelsende Verscheyde seldsame Ceremonien en plechtigheden, die voor desen by verscheyde natien en volckeren SOO IN ASIA, EUROPA, AFRICA ALS AMERICA. In gebruyck zyn geweest, als wel die voor meerendeel noch hedendaegs gebruykt ende onderhouden werden. *Naeuw-keuringh, soo uyt oude als nieuwe Schryvers by een vergaders DOOR P. DE NEYN, RECHTSGELEERDE*; Voor desen gewesene Fiscael in dienst der E.E. Oost-Indische Compagnie, aen CABO DE BOA ESPERANCE. Mitsgaders desselfs vrolyckeuyren, Uyt verscheyden soorten van mengel-dichten Bestaande. t'Amsterdam, by JAN BOUMAN, Boeckverkooper inde Kalverstraet, 1681.

<sup>13</sup> *Dictionary of South African Biography* (DSAB), vol. IV, p. 131.

<sup>14</sup> *Dictionary of South African Biography* (DSAB), vol. IV, pp. 378-379.

<sup>15</sup> Barkly East Reporter, Barkly-Oos 1982.

<sup>16</sup> **Wreedheid tegen Tweelingen, en andere Kinderen, en omtrent Oude en Zieke Liederen.** Zoo een vrouw, tweelingen krygt, dat beude dochters zyn, laten zy 't oudste kind alleen in 't leven; maar zoo 't een zoon en een dochter is, zoo houden zy den zoon; maar brengen de dochter, in een velletjie gewonden, in 't veld, of leggen dat kind in een bosje neder, daar het van koude en gebrek (zoo 't al van geen wild gedierte verscheurd werd) ten eersten sterft. Zoo nu de moeder in de kraam komt te sterven, begraven zy dat levend kind by de doode moeder in een en 't zelve graf, bindende het zelve op haaren schoot, werpen 'er maar wat aarde over heenen, en trappem die nog wel wat toe, waar na zy die met steenen tegen 't wild gedierte bedekken; daar van geen andre reden gevende, dan dat, als de moeder dood is, niemand dat kind zou konnen opbrengen. Omtrent 1680 weerd zulk een kind nog levend uyt 't graf door eenige Hollandsche Vrouwen gehaald, en opgevoed, waar onder de Vrouw[en] van **Diemer, Mostaart**, en andere waren. [Beschryvinge van de Kaap der Goede Hoop met de zaaken daar toe behoorende (Amsterdam 1726) / *Description of the Cape of Good Hope with the matters concerning it* (edited by Dr. E.H. Raidt & English translation by Maj. R. Raven-Hart, Van Riebeeck Society, Cape Town 1973), vol. II, pp. 98-101.

<sup>17</sup> Dat 'er zoo nu en dan eenige van deze Hottentots wel 20 jaaren, en langer, by de Hollanders, in Hollands gewaad gewoont, en dan egter weer na hunne Natie geloopt hebben, is van ons bevoorens al aangemerkt; maar nu en dan zyn 'er ook by zekere gevallen wel eenige van de kinderen dezer Hottentots hier gedoopt, als wel byzonder zeker kind, dat zy met de overleden moeder levend begraven hadden, en dat de vrouwen van **Elmer** [*sic*] **Diemer, Wouter Mostaart**, die van **Hendrik van Suurwaarden** (namaals met den Dispensier **Willem van Dieden** getrouwt) en de weduwe van **N. Bosch** (namaals met den Assistent **Joannes Praetorius** hertrouwt) dus uit 't graf gehaald, en eenigen tyd, na gedoopt te zyn, hebben opgevoed, tot dat het quam te sterven ... [Beschryvinge van de Kaap der Goede Hoop met de zaaken daar toe behoorende (Amsterdam 1726) / *Description of the Cape of Good Hope with the matters concerning it* (edited by Dr.



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E.H. Raidt & English translation by Maj. R. Raven-Hart, Van Riebeeck Society, Cape Town 1973), vol. II, pp. 262-263].

<sup>18</sup> Prof. Serton, who edited Valentyn's work for the Van Riebeeck Society, states incorrectly in a footnote that the incident is not recounted in the Company Journal. There is a journal entry but not for the year stated incorrectly by Valentyn.

<sup>19</sup> CA: MOOC 10/1 (Vendu Rollen 1691-1717), no. 27 (Vendu Rol: **Christina Does**, wife of **Adriaan van Reede**, 10 September 1703).

<sup>20</sup> C. Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederduitsch-Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid-Afrika*, Deel I (Hollandsch Afrikaansche Uitgevers Maatschappij v/h Jacques Dusseau & Co, Amsterdam – Kaapstad 1906 & 1907), p. 259.

<sup>21</sup> She marries the surgeon **Willem ten Damme** (from Oldenzeel). They own the farm *Brakfontein* (Mansell G. Upham, 'Brotherly Love at Philadelphia - The Widow Priem & the alternative Brakfontein congregation', *Capensis*, nos. 2,3,4 of 1998 & no. 1 of 1999). Two of her daughters marry **Swellengrebel père** and **fils** respectively.

<sup>22</sup> DRC/A: G 1/1 Baptismal Register (Groote Kerk), p. 4; Mansell G. Upham, 'At war with society ... Did God hear? ... the curious baptism of a 'Hottentot' infant named *Ismael*', *Capensis*, no. 4 (2000), pp. 29-51.

<sup>23</sup> *Neue Ost-Indische Reisbeschreibung von Anno 1669 biss 1677 handelnde von unterscheidenen Afrikanischen und Barbarischen Völkern, sonderlich dere an dem Vor-Gebürge, Caput bonae spei sich enthaltenden sogenannten Hottentotten*. Leipzig, 1681 [R. Raven-Hart, *Cape Good Hope*, vol. I, pp. 114-139 and in particular p. 128]. Is he the same person as **Johannes Schreyer (1655-1694)** - see [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Schreyer?](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Schreyer?)

<sup>24</sup> Sara's autopsy will be the subject of a forthcoming article by the same writer.

<sup>25</sup> From Tønsberg in Norway, he is a student in Copenhagen and becomes private tutor to Norwegian Major-General **Visscher**. On 1 December 1669 he joins the VOC at Amsterdam as cadet. Embarking on the *Sticht Utrecht* (together with the Cape's new commander, **Pieter Hackius** & 14 women on board), he arrives at Cape (20 March 1670) leaving (1 April 1670). He is stationed in the garrison at the Batavia Castle (until 1671). Engaged to teach Hebrew to a partly qualified preacher, he is offered a post at the school on condition of conversion from Lutheranism to Calvinism. This he refuses to do. Appointed bookkeeper for a private voyage to China, he sails (17 June 1672) and stays at Macao (21 June-3 November 1672) returning thereafter to Batavia. Helped by his Preacher-pupil, he is allowed to return home after two and a half years instead of the conditional 5-year period of his engagement. He sails (4 February 1673) on the *Alphen* (together with *Wapen van de Veer*, [Frans] *Europa*, *Pinacher*, *Papenborg*, *Stormer*) returning to Copenhagen via England.

<sup>26</sup> Friderici Bollingii, *Oost-Indiske Reise-bog* (Copenhagen 1678) [R. Raven-Hart, *Cape Good Hope*, vol. I, pp. 148, 171-172 & 173-174].

<sup>27</sup> *Adventure at the Cape of Good Hope in December 1672* by Jan Pietersz: Cortemünde (transcribed & edited from original manuscript in Royal Library, Copenhagen by Henning Henningsen translated & annotated with additional material by Douglas & Vera Varley (Friends of the South African Library, Cape Town 1962, 49r, p. 20)).

<sup>28</sup> Born Deventer (1647), doctor and botanist who writes 1<sup>st</sup> European account of acupuncture *De Acupunctura* & 1<sup>st</sup> detailed study of tea; appointed physician for VOC in Java (1673); becomes a member of the Council of Justice; also writes a book *An Account of the Cape of Good Hope and the Hottentots* describing the Khoikhoi during early Dutch settlement at the Cape; dies Batavia (1 June 1700).

<sup>29</sup> *A Short Account of the Cape of Good Hope and of the Hottentots who inhabit that region* (Schaffhausen 1686) [I. Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, p. 143].

<sup>30</sup> He joins the VOC (15 November 1675). On 2 December 1675, he embarks on the *Asia* arriving at the Cape (12 April 1676) and goes on shore (23 April 1676). On 1 May 1676, he leaves the Cape for Batavia where he stays (June 1676 – October 1677). Thereafter, he is stationed at Ceylon (October 1677-January 1782).

<sup>31</sup> *Journal- und Tage-Buch seiner sechs-jährigen Ost-Indianischen Reise* (Tübingen 1688) [R. Raven-Hart, *Cape Good Hope*, vol. I, p. 183].

<sup>32</sup> Born 1644. He sails (June 1684) to the Cape. In October 1684, he becomes secretary of the Council of Policy. In 1684, he accompanies **Ryklof van Goens** to Batavia returning to the Cape (1686). In June 1694 he becomes a free-burgher at the Cape. He signs his will (3 February 1714) whilst living at his farm *Welmoed* near Eerste Rivier. He dies ante 1726.

<sup>33</sup> J.G. Grevenbroek, *An elegant and accurate account of The African Race Living Round The Cape of Good Hope commonly called Hottentots* (1695) [I. Schapera, *The Early Cape Hottentots*, pp. 181 & 183].

<sup>34</sup> *Kurze Nachricht von den Hottentotten* (Bey Casper Jahkel, Hamburg 1714), p. 24.





- <sup>35</sup> He arrives (11 June 1706) at the Cape on the *Unie* [H.C.V. Leibbrandt, *Précis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope: Letters Despatched* (31 March 1706)].
- <sup>36</sup> *Caput Bonae Spei Hodiernum. Das ist Vollständige Beschreibung des Africanischen Vorgebürges der Guten Hoffnung* (Nürnberg 1719), pp. 445, 446, 447, 544 & Plate.
- <sup>37</sup> *A Geographical and topographical description of the Cape of Good Hope by O.F. Mentzel* (translated by H.G. Madelbrote (Van Riebeeck Society, Cape Town 1921, 1925 & 1944), vol. III, pp. 278- 279.
- <sup>38</sup> *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope towards the Antarctic Polar Circle around the World and to the Country of the Hottentots and the Caffres from the year 1772-1776* (editor: Vernon S. Forbes, Van Riebeeck Society Second Series, no. 7, Cape Town 1977), vol. I, pp. 359.
- <sup>39</sup> *Travels at the Cape of Good Hope, 1772-1775* (Van Riebeeck Society Second Series, no. 17, Cape Town 1986), vol. II, pp. 159, 184 & 195v
- <sup>40</sup> *An Account of the Cape of Good Hope ... in 1706 and 1707* (Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London 25, 310 (1708): 2423-2434, p. 5.
- <sup>41</sup> *Authentic Journal ...* (London 1794), pp. 282- 283.
- <sup>42</sup> *Neue Kurzgefasste Beschreibung des Vorgebirges der guten Hoffnung ...* (Leipzig 1779) (translation by Allamand & Klockner), p. 32.
- <sup>43</sup> *Reise van Kopenhage ...* (Odensen 1784), n. 361.
- <sup>44</sup> He is the new ambassador to Siam sailing from Brest (1 March 1687) with a fleet of 6 ships arriving at Table Bay (11 June 1687).
- <sup>45</sup> *Du Royaume de Siam*, vol. II (Paris 1691). [R. Raven-Hart, *Cape Good Hope*, vol. II, pp. 321].
- <sup>46</sup> Sails from Gravesend (14 April 1689) in command of *Benjamin* to take out news of the *Glorious Revolution* which puts William of Orange and Mary II on English throne – stops at the Cape on his return.
- <sup>47</sup> *Voyage to Suratt* (London 1696) [R. Raven-Hart *Cape Good Hope*, vol. II, pp. 395-396].
- <sup>48</sup> *A Faithful Account and Description of the Cabo de Goede Hoop and of its Native Inhabitants, their Customs, Activities and Character, together with a Description of the Plants found in these Parts of the Country and of the Demestic and Wild Animals compiled by Johan Daniel Bütner* (1716) (edited by G.S. Nienaber & R. Raven-Hart), p. 82.
- <sup>49</sup> Donald Moodie, *The Record*, p. 335 (Extracts from Company Journal 17 September 1673).
- <sup>50</sup> Rev. **Petrus Kalden** takes **Frederick Adolf** to the Netherlands (1708). **H.A. van Reede** took Captain **Bego alias Pegu** to the Netherlands (1677) and thereafter to Batavia (1685). **Rijckloff van Goens** takes **Doman alias Anthonij** (and one other, name unknown, who dies *en route*) to Batavia (1657/1658). Governor-General **Van Diemen** takes a ‘Hottentot’ (name unknown) to Batavia (1636). **Autshumao alias Harry** is taken to Java by the English (1629/1631). **Choree** (and one other who died) are taken to England (1613). With the exception of the the afore-mentioned 2 fatalities, these all appear to return to the Cape.
- <sup>51</sup> Besides **Eva**, we know about **Dobbeltje, Vogelstruijs** and **Cornelia** in the Van Riebeeck Household. **Sara / Zara** who first worked for **Lydia de Pape**, the wife of the *secunde Hendrik Lacus* (from Wesel) and thereafter for **Angela / Engela van Bengale alias Maaij Ansela**, the wife of **Arnoldus Willemsz: Basson** (from Wesel). The free-burgher **Jan Dircx: de Beer** also has a ‘Hottentot’ woman (name not found) who works in his household for 16 years.
- <sup>52</sup> Mansell G. Upham, ‘Consecrations to God: The *nasty, brutish and short* life of **Susanna from Bengal**, otherwise known as ‘**One Ear**’ – 2<sup>nd</sup> recorded female convict at the VOC-occupied Cape of Good Hope, *Capensis*, no. 3 (2001), pp. 10-24; & Mansell G. Upham, ‘**Zara (c. 1648-1671)**: an inquiry into the (mis)application of traditionally prescribed punishment against persons committing suicide during the VOC’s colonial occupation of the Cape of Good Hope’, *Capensis* 4/2001, pp. 14-37
- <sup>53</sup> G. Con de Wet, *Die Vryliede en Vryswartes in die Kaapse Nedersetting 1657-1707*, p. 128.
- <sup>54</sup> He arrives at the Cape (26 November 1672) and goes ashore (29 November 1672).
- <sup>55</sup> Hans Petersen (original manuscript in German) housed in The Royal Library, Copenhagen: Manuscript NKS 388, 4to; Jan Pietersz: Cortemünde, *Adventure at the Cape of Good Hope in December 1672*, (transcribed & 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:
- <sup>56</sup> The editors assume this to mean “that her menstruation had ceased”. Although possibly correct – unlikely. The explanation seems to be a little farfetched. From the context of the passage ‘fountain’ more likely refers to her liquidity in terms of the Company’s pension which was conditional to her remaining virtuous and subsequently terminated by the Company.
- <sup>57</sup> Hansen uses the term *quasi in arrest zu sitzen* [Royal Library, Copenhagen: Manuscript NKS 388, 4to.]
- <sup>58</sup> Resolution: Council of Policy (4 & 5 March 1670).



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<sup>59</sup> CA: CJ 1, p. 326 (4 August 1666); C 2394, p. 418 / 25 / 137 (Attestation: **Hendrick Barentsz: [van der Zee]** (from Leewarden) & **Hans Coenraet Veugelein** [Voegeli / Vögeli from [Gächlingen?] Schaffhausen [Switzerland], 23 August 1666).

<sup>60</sup> François Valentijn, *Description of the Cape with matters concerning it*, vol. II, pp. 192-193.

<sup>61</sup> **A(e)rnou(d)t van Overbe(e)ke / Overbee(c)k (1632-1674)** born The Hague (15 December 1632); studies law at Leiden; advocate in Amsterdam & The Hague (since 1659); en route to Batavia as advocate-fiscal sails on *Zuyd Polsbroek* stopping at Cape (July 1668); VOC Honourable Councillor of Justice in Batavia (1668-1672); returns to Netherlands as admiral of Return Fleet ex Batavia; appointed commissioner to inspect Cape administration; sails on *Tidoor* arriving at Cape (25 March 1672) & departing (23 April 1672); instigates 1<sup>st</sup> treaty formalizing 'purchase' of Cape of Good Hope from Cape indigenes (treaty signed 19 April 1672); writer & poet in style of Tengnagel & Focquenbroch: *Anecdota sive historiae jocosae* (1672-1674) & travel journal *Geestige en vermaecklycke reijs beschrijving naar Oost-Indiën* (1668) & poetry anthology *Geestige wercken* (1678); back in The Hague member of Rederikerskamer dies Amsterdam (16 July 1674).

<sup>62</sup> Major R. Raven-Hart, *Cape Good Hope*, p. 109.

