

GERINGER AND BOK - A GENEALOGICAL JIG-SAW

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Hans Kaspar Geringer and Christiaan Bok, burgers and partners of the early 1700's form an interesting genealogical study by reason of their association with Anna of Bengal or Anna Groothening. The two men were Germans, Geringer a Prussian from Reetz and Bok a native of Wolfenbüttel in what was then North Germany. Aged forty-three and twenty seven¹ respectively they arrived at the Cape as soldiers in 1696, possibly even in the same ship and their friendship dated from this year which was during the term of office of Simon van der Stel.

The sequence of events discloses that Geringer was the more enterprising of the pair for by 1700 he had been excused from his basic military duties and was in a position to hire Bok to work for him. The contract was the usual official document restricting the loan of services to one year with remuneration of twelve guilders a month in addition to board and lodging but allowed the hired to work *'alhier in de Caap of ten platten lande'*.

A firm mutual feeling developed between master and servant and in his first will executed a mere five months after the contract above, Geringer states that as he had *'no father mother or other relative alive'* he appointed *'syne goeden vriend Christiaan Bok'* as his sole and universal heir.² By 27.5.1701 Geringer had attained burger status³ and had earlier launched himself as a baker, which undertaking he eventually operated, together with Bok as partner, from their property in Heerestraat (Castle St.), Cape Town. The actual partnership contract has not been found but that it was an established fact is borne out by their mutual will in 1705 which institutes the survivor of the *'maatschappij'* as the sole and universal heir to the common estate. Between them Bok and Geringer executed seven wills and with the exception of the first two, each contained entirely different dispositions; only one stable factor remained, namely that the survivor was to be the residential heir to the common goods. They possessed a sincere mutual regard for one another which nothing appears to have disturbed and this is shown, not only by the actual provisions of their testaments, but also by the very terms used in the documents.

In 1708 Bok had bought an erf in Block G, that area bounded by the present Castle, Burg, Hout and St. Georges Streets⁴ and a few months later Geringer followed suit by purchasing two adjacent pieces of land.⁵ In all probability the site had been leased by them for some time. This holding comprised the two centre erven in Castle Street on part of which Foster's china business operates today. Two dwellings and many outbuildings stood on these erven and according to their partnership all were held by both men.

In all probability the houses were not detached. The inventory of Bok's deceased estate which was in effect the joint estate of himself and Geringer, mentions only one *'woonhuys aan de Caab'* as far as furnishings are concerned although each dwelling is assigned a specific value namely 8000 and 5500 guilders respectively.⁶ The furnishings recorded were somewhat basic, excluding what might be called nonessentials such as muurcaste, gueridons, kledercaste and grandfather clocks (a wall clock served the household as a timepiece). Tables and chairs there were in abundance and several kists were mentioned, one of which was copperbound. These may have served the family for the storage of their clothing. At least Michiel Bok, the elder son, later kept his garments in this fashion for Geringer's inventory states that one such had been *'geleent aan Michiel Bok om sy klederen in te bergen'*.⁷ A few

¹ CJ. 2650 no. 6, 27.8.1709.

² CJ. 2597, 9.6.1700.

³ CJ. 2873, 29.1.1700, a note in the margin to this effect.

⁴ Transfer 724 / 23.6.1708

⁵ Transfer 537 / 21.9.1708 and Transfer 740 / 5.10.1708

⁶ MOOC 813 no. 36, 27/28.8.1716

⁷ MOOC 813 no.95, April 1719. This inventory kept the compilers occupied for nine days and they were obviously very concerned that they recorded details correctly. This original document is liberally scattered with tally marks

pictures, two mirrors, one gilt framed the other *'met zwarte lijst'* and a small glass case were the only articles which suggested a departure from the strict utilitarianism of the place. One of the fourposters was of stinkwood where no doubt the senior partner slept with curtains drawn when nights were cold; the other was described as *'een ledikant'* with no curtains and served Bok for his nocturnal activities.

The most important part of the property was the kitchen and the bakery which was housed in one of the outbuildings. Above, in the solder, were stored large quantities of flour, wheat, oats and barley in addition to sugar. There was also *'een huys molen'* which Mr James Walton the expert on mills considers was probably hand-operated but attached to a wall and larger than the usual hand mill. Several scales, numerous breadpans and the extensive equipment necessary for the trade cluttered the other outhouses. The kitchen requisites were generous in the extreme and included the astonishing number of 378 knives!

Many slaves would have been necessary to work in this bakery, as indeed appears from later documents, but in this particular instance they are not mentioned. But the presence of one slave in the household is certain, namely Anna of Bengal, the leading lady of the life drama of Geringer and Bok whose association with both men was to have far-reaching consequences.

Anna belonged to Geringer and coming from Bengal was probably lightskinned and even beautiful as were many of the girls imported from that country. They formed a striking contrast to those more swarthy beauties from Mocambique, Madagascar and Guinee and several early Cape freeburgers chose to make these Indian girls their legal wives.⁸ Nothing whatever is known of Anna's age nor when she died, except that it was after 1719. Here then on the stage of the Castle Street menage was Anna and she soon attracted the serious attention of the thirty-four-year-old Bok, and in 1702 their son Michiel was born. He was baptised in the Dutch Reformed Church on 17th March of that year as the issue of *'Anna van Bengal'* - no Christiaan Bok was mentioned - with Michiel van Dueren (in all probability *'Düring'*) and Marietje Jacobs as witnesses.⁹ As issue of Anna, who was Geringer's slave, Michiel too fell into this category and remained there until his mother, himself and her three subsequent daughters, Maria, Catharina and Johanna were manumitted by their master in 1709.¹⁰ Hoge, in Personalia of the Germans of the Cape records no baptisms for any of the children, but gives the years of birth which were calculated from the ages given for them in other documents. The will of 1709, however, mentions the issue as *'haar vier gedoopte kinderen'* which should be accepted, as of the four, the baptisms of Michiel and Johanna have been found in church records.¹¹ Careful searching has failed to reveal the other two, but in all probability they were baptised.

The following year the household slave tally was increased by the arrival of Maria who was almost certainly Geringer's daughter by Anna but this will be discussed when the children are considered individually.

After the birth of Maria, Anna once more transferred her attentions to Bok to whom she remained faithful, as far as is known, until his death in 1716, not in 1718 as appears in de Villiers/Pama. In 1705 a second daughter, Catharina, arrived; followed by Johanna in 1708.

Geringer had now added Michiel, Maria Catharina and Johanna to his roll of slaves and was motivated to grant their mother and the four children their freedom. He obviously placed great faith in testamentary dispositions and the secretary of the Court of Justice was obliged

made in pencil in the margins where articles were in excess of eight or nine. In some cases the assessment of one official was checked by another with added or erased marks as the occasion demanded. This is a very human record indeed.

⁸ Arnoldus Willemsse Basson and Angela of Bengal; Gerrit Willemsse and Magteld Cornelissen of Bengal - Heese, Die Herkoms van die Afrikaner: Olhann Ahlers and Dorothea of Bengal - Hoge, Personalia of the Germans at the Cape p.3.

⁹ DRC Archives, G1 8/1.

¹⁰ C.J. 2650 no. 6, 27.8.1709.

¹¹ DRC Archives, GI 8/1.

on many occasions to record what the testator had in mind at the moment. On 27th August 1709, Abraham Poulé, the official of that time together with his clerk, grappled with this third will. Geringer aged fifty-six and Bok forty-one, first cancelled their previous testaments executed either singly or in partnership; the survivor was again to be sole heir with the usual provisions for Christian burial and payment of just debts. Anna and the children were all granted freedom and Michiel was recorded as '*Michiel Geringer*' for the first and only time. It can only be supposed that this was an unnoticed clerical error and it was never repeated. Under the further provisions of the will Michiel was to inherit the larger of the two houses in Castle St. together with the main outhouses and the bakery, while the smaller house next door was to go to Anna and her three daughters. In addition the survivor was charged with the payment of 200 guilders to the poor within two months of the death of the partner.¹²

If by this generous action of the manumission of the slaves, Geringer hoped to prompt Bok to marry his mistress and provide a legal name for her and their common offspring he was disappointed, and the status quo remained unchanged in this respect. Her position in the household continued as before and she performed the same duties that were hers during the period of her serfdom. She was now, however a free woman, bound to neither man, and at liberty to depart at will.

It would be interesting to determine exactly what set of circumstances finally persuaded Bok to make Anna his wife. On New Year's Day 1713 she was baptised.¹³ Did this fact precipitate the marriage on the 5th February the same year or was she baptised because the marriage was imminent? She may of course in the delight in her new freedom, have threatened to abandon the two men and thus disrupt the pleasant *ménage à trois* which had now endured for thirteen years. On the other hand there was another factor which may have had a bearing on the situation. In 1710 Geringer and Bok extended their activities beyond the confines of Table Valley, and in August bought a farm in the country. This was Veldhuyzen and was purchased from the estate of the late Hugo de Goyer.¹⁴ The estate was described as being at Rondebosch but the area today is known as Claremont. This twenty-one morgen property must have required a resident manager and it is possible that Bok, as the younger man, assumed this position. Living some seven to eight miles away from his Anna could not have been to his liking, particularly as she had already had one fall from grace as far as he was concerned and it is also significant that no child was born to the couple between the years 1709 and 1713. Did Bok suddenly realise that the only way to induce Anna to come to Veldhuyzen was to make her his wife? This cannot of course be substantiated but on 8th July 1714 their son, Christiaan was baptised in the church in Cape Town.¹⁵ They were to have one more child, Clara, born in 1716 - the year of her father's death.

The exact date of his death has not been established. The inventory of his deceased estate was taken on the 27/28th August 1716 which points to death certainly not more than two months previously, probably even a lesser period if the usual procedure was adopted. On the 2nd October 1714 Bok had made a will, on this occasion on his own,¹⁶ bequeathing all of what he had possessed to Geringer and giving specific instructions that no one, not even his wife, children or heirs was to allow a separation of the partnership property, it was all to go to Geringer unconditionally. Christiaan obviously had great faith in his partner and friend and never made his wife and/or family lay a charge on him but firmly believed that, in the event of his death, Geringer would automatically assume responsibility for their dependants. This trust was not misplaced.

Geringer was stunned by the death of the younger man and a year later in a case before the Council of Justice these words appear:

¹² CJ. 2650 no. 6 27.8.1709.

¹³ DRC Archives, G1 8/2.

¹⁴ Transfer 816 / 14.8.1710

¹⁵ DRC Archives, G1 812.

¹⁶ MOOC 71113 no. 73,2.10.1714.

*'ik kan nood-dringen der wijze niet agtergelaaten aan U Ed. Gest. E:Agth mijn droeftheyd to betuygen, over het afsterven van myn gewesene maat, Christiaan Bok, zaf. agtergelaatende een weduwee met ses onmondige kinderen met dewelke ik nog dagelyks moet sukkelen'*¹⁷

He was then aged sixty-four which was considered old in those difficult times and certainly the responsibility of a young family ranging in age from one year to fourteen must have caused him great concern, when added to the sorrow at the loss of his comrade.

The circumstances that occasioned the above outburst resulted from the association of both the deceased Bok and himself with a Swiss, Jacob Marik. According to the preserved documents Bok had, prior to his death, engaged Marik and taken him into his household *'tot infomeeren zyn kinderen.'* Marik was reasonably educated and had worked as a clerk for the Company. He was also an artful scoundrel, and after Bok's death, playing on Geringer's distress, had persuaded him to enter into partnership with him and had even managed to obtain Geringer's power of attorney. This Marik promptly abused, reviled his partner to the slaves *'both at the bakery and on the country estate'*, mismanaged funds and generally assumed complete authority over all the partnership transactions. In addition to all this he had insinuated his way into the affections of Anna, promising marriage and the adoption of the children. Poor Geringer was harrassed beyond all bearing and requested that the authorities would terminate this state of affairs between him and Marik in order that *'myne laste dagen (onder U. Edele. lofferlyke regering) stil en gerust mag eyndegen.'*¹⁸

Surprisingly cancellation was refused by the Court of Justice, and somehow the situation was smoothed over but Geringer's last years were far from *'stil en gerust'*. In 1717 and 1718 he was engaged in a bitter boundary dispute on Veldhuyzen, in which case Marik, as his agent, was also involved. For many years even before Geringer's purchase, the common boundary between the Louws on Louwvliet and Questenberg and the owners of Veldhuyzen, the adjoining property, had been causing trouble. Finally the matter came to a head in 1717 when it was brought before the Court of Justice. Depositions, wrangles and what today would fall under the term 'mudslinging' occupied the time of the court for several months. Eventually a decision was arrived at, resulting in the regranteeing of all three properties with amended and adjusted boundaries.¹⁹

Troubles were heaped on the ageing Geringer who was soon faced with the problem of yet another mouth to feed and the wailing of an infant to disturb his rest. On 6th March 1718 while he was still heavily involved with the Court of Justice and Veldhuyzen, Anna Groothenning gave birth to a son by Jacob Marik. This must have been a bitter blow and he decided to make another will which he executed on 27th January 1719 at 5 p.m.²⁰ before Willem van Taak, first clerk to the Council of Policy with Ryk Tulbagh, who later became governor, and Christoffel Brand as witnesses. Annulling all previous dispositions he instituted Michiel Bok as his sole and universal heir with one charge, that he care for his brother, Christiaan until the lad's twenty-first year and see that he received a reasonable education, *'te laten leeren leesen, schryven en vorders alles wat tat een eerlyke opvoeding betaarnt'*. The other children and their mother were not mentioned. One proviso was added, namely that should Geringer die before Michiel attained the age of twenty-one, the immovable property was to remain unsold until this event took place. Obviously Geringer had no idea that death was for him so close; he was at the date of the will *'mentally and physically sound'*, yet within a fortnight he was dead. His end must have been rather sudden which is substantiated by the absence of a claim in his deceased estate for medical expenses which is always a pointer to an illness in bed.

¹⁷ CJ. 1030, 20.1.1717.

¹⁸ CJ. 1030, 20.1.1717. The details of this transaction are all contained in this document.

¹⁹ C. 12 pp.266-268, 2.1 1.1717 and C. 12 pp.384-393. All the proceedings dealing with this dispute are to be found in these documents. The three grants were OCF 11 330,332, 334 all of 20.4.1718.

²⁰ CJ. 2561, 27.1.1719.

Michiel was now forced into the position of head of the household, an unenviable situation for a youth of sixteen years, particularly when the intricacies of the deceased estate were taken into account. The family obviously required ready money and on 28th February 1719 he made an application to the Council of Policy to give permission to realise the immovable estate assets. He asserted that in reality the estate also belonged to Anna who had followed her husband as partner to Geringer and, as a consequence, the assets belonged to her and to the children. The authorities did not see their way clear to deal with so complicated a matter and referred the request to the Court of Justice²¹ which on 2nd March released the property from the testamentary restriction.²²

At the date of Geringer's death he owned five houses in Table Valley together with Veldhuyzen. In one of these town houses in Castle St. he himself lived, '*een huys in de heerestraat door den overledene bewoont beweest.*' Presumably Anna and the children shared this house if the numerous articles of clothing, both male and female, are taken into account. The inventory of Geringer's estate discloses that he was a wealthy man and the appointments of his home were far superior to those appearing in that of his dead partner. There is a combined estate account for the two men²³ which in itself would form a basis for an exercise in social history. The total value of the estate was given as 56,528 guilders which was distributed to Bok's widow and the children, even little Jacob Marik receiving a share!

Michiel lost no time in acting on the finding of the Court and on 26th May 1719 the Castle Street premises were transferred to Melt van der Spuy.²⁴ The heir may have retained a portion of the Castle St erven for himself but there is some confusion with regard to these. The three hire houses in Block NN, '*naast aan malkander staan*' were also disposed of within the next month. These houses lay in the block bounded by the present Long, Longmarket, Loop and Church Streets and comprised the Longmarket Street side with the exception of that erf on the corner of Long Street. One house, erf no. 2 was sold to the burger Nicolaas Mulder and the other two were registered in the name of Rudolf Frederick Steenbok.²⁵

The farm Veldhuyzen was described in detail²⁶ and was being actively farmed but by whom has not been established. Perhaps Jacob Marik was in charge though his name does not appear after 1718 to support this contention. Veldhuyzen was a grant of 1660 and had belonged to Jan Dirkse de Beer after whose wife, Anna van Veldhuyzen of Woerden, the estate took its name. In 1719 the property supported a far smaller number of stock to that appearing in Bok's inventory of three years previously and in general the farm seems to have deteriorated in production. No wine or brandy, both of which were mentioned in the earlier inventory, are mentioned here. Unfortunately no opgaafrolle which might elucidate the agricultural situation, are available for this period in the Peninsula. Sixteen male slaves were listed, and two who had run away a few months previously were on record in addition to two women.

The house itself as described in both estate inventories is substantially the same, namely a small 'h' with a *voorhuys*, rooms on the right and left, '*galderykamer*', '*galdery*' and kitchen and the furnishings do not differ to any marked degree.

Michiel Bok had no intention of maintaining this estate. It was transferred to him on 13th December 1721 from Geringer's estate²⁷ and in April 1722 he sold it to Jacobus van der Heyden.²⁸ The subsequent story of Veldhuyzen is dealt with in Vintage Cape Town by Dr C. Pama.

²¹ CJ. 13 pp.310-318,28.2.1719

²² CJ. 1032, 2.3.1 719

²³ MOOC 1311 no. 115 dating from Bok's death in 1716 until 24.9.1721.

²⁴ Transfer 1294 / 265.1719.

²⁵ Transfer 1296 and Transfer 1297 / 15.6.1 719.

²⁶ MOOC 813 no. 95 April/May 1719.

²⁷ Transfer 1429 / 13-12-1721.

²⁸ Transfer 1450 / 15.4.1722.

With the death of Geringer, the prosperous business enterprise that he and Bok had built up at the Cape since their arrival at the end of the seventeenth century vanished almost overnight. If Michiel Bok did continue to operate the bakery for a period the information has not come down to us.

THE CHILDREN OF BOK AND GERINGER

What happened to the six children, two sons and four daughters sired by these two friends? They certainly played their part in populating the adopted country of their respective fathers.

At the age of sixteen **Michiel Bok** had the responsibilities of the Geringer estate thrust upon him and on 2nd July 1719, just after his seventeenth birthday he assumed those of a married man by making Elisabeth van der Poel his wife, and thus became a major in the eyes of the law. Elisabeth was the daughter of the wealthy Pieter van der Poel who surely must have been disturbed that his child should marry the son of an Indian slave. Nothing whatever is known of the activities of this young couple beyond the fact that they had two children, sixteen years apart. It seems that Michiel may have farmed in a small way near Cape Town, possibly in the Koeberg, for the inventory of their joint estate at Elisabeth's death in 1737 discloses that, in addition to their household goods, they had forty sheep, five horses, twenty-eight mixed stock, ox wagons, ploughs and other agricultural equipment, not concomitant with an urban property.²⁹ No will or other document has been traced to determine when Michiel died. The baptism of their first child, Johanna, is recorded on 8th July 1720 with her mother's sister, Maria and her husband, Melt van der Spuy as witnesses. Sixteen years later Christiaan was baptised on 29th July 1736 with Catharina Bok and Steven Goutsche as sponsors.

Johanna Bok II married twice. At the age of twenty-eight, on 2nd June 1748 her marriage to Jan Hendrik Vos, the ancestor of that family at the Cape took place in the Dutch Reformed Church. They produced five sons. After the death of Vos she married Lodewyk Vigetenaar on 6th July 1766. Hoge assigns him the correct German form of his name, Ludwig Fichtener and states that after a few years the marriage ended in divorce. Fichtener died three years later having amassed a considerable fortune.

The son of Michiel and Elisabeth, Christiaan left the confines of Table Bay and made his home in the Hantam/Bokkeveld where, as a pioneer settler he suffered the usual raids and incursions of the local Hottentots. In June 1772 his farm was attacked at night by a gang who set fire to the house and attempted to shoot Bok with poisoned arrows (were these invaders perhaps Bushmen?). L. S. Faber, the Landdrost of Stellenbosch under whose jurisdiction that area then fell, eventually had the Hottentot Claas arrested. This man had at one time worked for Bok and had probably been instrumental in planning the raid. Surely death would have been preferable to the sentence imposed upon him namely that he be 'rivetted in chains in order therein to labour for life at the Company's public works on Robben Island, without wages'.³⁰

Christiaan married Maria, daughter of Nicolaas Ryk of Swellengrebelfontein in the vicinity of Nieuwoudtville and he himself held three loan farms in this region namely de Vondeling, de Groenerivier and de Diepekloof.³¹ Earlier he had probably been in possession of others for he was visited by Thunberg and Masson in 1772-1774 and William Paterson in 1777- 1779.³² Bok's mother-in-law, the Widow Ryk, too features often in travellers' tales. Only one son appears in de Villiers/Pama, but according to their will they had also two daughters, Maria Cornelia Steenkamp who predeceased them leaving two children Maria Cornelia and Christiaan Steenkamp, and the second, Elisabeth Cornelia.³³ The name Christiaan Bok still

²⁹ MOOC 815 1737. No actual date beyond the year is given.

³⁰ Moodie: The Records Vol. 111. p.13, 17.

³¹ MOOC 7/1/55 no. 11, 11.2.1721.

³² Forbes: Pioneer Travellers in South Africa pp. 41 and 8s -86.

³³ MOOC 7/1/55 no. 11, 11.2.1794.

appears in the lower part of the north-west Cape presumably descendants of Michiel Nicolaas Bok, the only son of Christiaan and Maria.

The second son of Anna and Christiaan, also named Christiaan, by his own admission, never married.³⁴ He was the first legitimately born child of the couple and was baptised in Cape Town on 8th July 1714, with Jan Verbeek and Leonora de Vyf as witnesses.³⁵ Despite the fact that Michiel had the duty of educating his younger brother, Christiaan does not seem to have benefitted as far as handwriting was concerned. Possibly the fact that he was '*siek te bedde leggende*' at the time he made his will contributed to the shakiness of his signature. As with the elder brother his occupation and place of residence are not known but was in the Cape district probably also in Table Valley or near vicinity. He owned four slaves, three men and one woman. January of Ceylon and Cupido of Bengal he freed unconditionally under his will and to start them off in their new lives as freemen he presented them with a wagon and three spans of oxen. The third slave, April of Bengal was to serve Christiaan's brother-in-law Andries Bester for four years and then he was given his freedom. The woman slave Francina Jansz, had been manumitted at some earlier date as she is described as '*de vrygegevene*' and to her he left sixty rixdollars. To his nephew, Michiel, son of (Jo)Anna Bok and Andries Bester and to his niece, Catharina Goutsche daughter of Catharina and Steven, he bequeathed a hundred rixdollars each. He had stood sponsor to both these children at baptism. The remainder of his estate was to be divided between his two friends, Hans Diederick Mohr and Jacobus Hendriks who were also appointed executors.³⁶ When Mohr died in 1785 he owned a luxurious home in Kikvorseneyland, the area in the vicinity of Coffee Lane off the present Barrack St. Bok presumably died shortly after making this will for he disappears from records.

The position of **Maria**, eldest daughter of Anna of Bengal presents some interesting features. She was born according to documentary evidence in 1703³⁷ but despite careful research no baptism has been found either by Hoge or the present writer. In 1709 she was freed from slavery together with the other children and was described as baptised. Hoge states that she was presumably the child of Anna and Geringer and available records do indeed seem to support this contention. The main evidence is that in the record of the marriage of Bok and Anna '*haar kinderen Michiel, Catharina en Johanna Bok*' appear as such in the actual marriage register³⁸ which means that Bok admitted paternity and, as a result, the children were, according to Roman Dutch law legitimised by the marriage of their parents. Maria's exclusion strengthens the belief that Bok was not her father.

The other pointers to the paternity of Geringer were derived from two wills made by him. By the first in 1713³⁹ he bequeathed 1000 rixdollars '*aan de slavin gent: Maria van de Caap*'. Had he momentarily forgotten that he had manumitted her or did he have another slave by this name? This seems unlikely for the next year, lying ill in bed he felt he had perhaps been too generous and after thinking matters over canceled all former wills, and, ignoring Anna and the other children, left 1000 guilders '*aan het vrye dogtertje Maria Groothenning*' with Christiaan Bok the residual heir to his estate.⁴⁰ Under this final clause all the other children would be provided for legally, but not Maria. To ensure her future Geringer directed that Bok should care for and house her until she came of age or married.

Considering all these facts it appears that Maria remained legally the child of Anna Groothenning and that she was never legitimised. That Geringer and not Bok fathered her also seems reasonable to infer. In preserved documents she is referred to as Maria Groothenning or Maria Bo(c)k and on one occasion Maria of Bengal. This occurred in the will of her second husband, Frans Verkouter made before Daniel Thibault, secretary of the Court

³⁴ CJ. 2661 no. 43, 2.7.1755.

³⁵ DRC Archives G1 8/2.

³⁶ CJ. 2661 no. 43, 11.2.1794.

³⁷ MOOC 813 no. 95. April/May 1719.

³⁸ DRC Archives G1 1311.

³⁹ CJ. 2598 no. 63, 25.6.1713.

⁴⁰ CJ. 2599, 1.11.1714

of Justice.⁴¹ Thibault at least was aware of her true origins, if any man was, for it was before him that Geringer made his will in 1714, which initially made provision for Maria. Three years later, in 1717 at the age of fourteen, Maria had an illegitimate son by Nicolaas Bruyn(s). The child was baptised on 25th April 1717 with the father's name recorded and with Hendrik Claasz and Anna Groothening as sponsors. As far as Geringer was concerned Maria was no longer his responsibility and her name does not occur in his final will of 1719.⁴² She did, however, receive a portion from his deceased estate⁴³ which once more strengthens the belief that she *was* his child.

The year after Geringer's death Maria became the wife of Thomas Ey(s)man, a German from Koningsberg⁴⁴ who had followed many callings, soldier, sailor, farmhand and stableboy. (Was he perhaps employed on Veldhuyzen?) While still so engaged he died in 1727. The inventory of his deceased estate discloses that the family was pathetically poor, all their worldly goods were a shotgun, sword, bed and bedding with a kist to hold their clothing.⁴⁵ Hoge mentions three sons and a daughter who was not, according to him, Eysman's child; but the inventory definitely states that the couple had four *sons*. The baptism of three of these has been found, namely Stephanus 26th February 1721, Johannes 23rd February 1724, and Christiaan 21st October 1725.⁴⁶

Within a year the widow married Frans Verkouter, a native of Zeeland.⁴⁷ Strangely both parties are described as '*weduwee*' in the Paarl register of the marriage on 15th February 1728. There were three issues, Maria baptised 13th March 1735, Anna Catharina 6th October 1737; and, Frans 25th February 1742. All married, and their unions with Daniel Nortier, Arnoldus Vosloo and Gesina Vortman respectively, produced many descendants.

In comparison with the older children Catharina and Johanna Bok lived far less complicated lives. Catharina was born in 1705 as deduced from documents⁴⁸ and remained a slave until 1709. Despite her description in the will granting the freedom as 'baptised' no record of this has been discovered. At the age of thirteen on 27th February 1718 she became the wife of Steven Gauché.⁴⁹ There are numerous descendants of the the sons and four daughters of this union. Gauché was born Estienne Gauché in Geneva c. 1684 and was thus his wife's senior by twenty-one years. The name changed from its original form and became Goutsche, Goutse, Gouws and Gous, with the last two those generally in use today in South Africa.

Johanna, later known as Anna, was, like Catharina the illegitimate issue of Anna. Her baptism took place on 21st August 1708 in Cape Town, with both parents named in the register.⁵⁰ When she was fourteen years old she married Andries Bester on 13th February 1724⁵¹ and became the stammoeder of that family. The couple had seven sons. Hoge states that Bester died in the Swartland 'in 1767' but this does not seem to be correct for on 11th November 1760 'the widow Andries Bester, Anna Bock' was granted two loanplaces '*gelegen in de*

⁴¹ CJ. 2598 no. 22, 13.9.1710. This is certainly the will of Frans Verkouter and Maria of Bengal. What is not correct is the dating in the document itself, namely 1710 as the date of execution which appears thus: 'een duisend seventhien honderd en thien smoggens omtrent thienuur'. From the proven life of the couple concerned this date is clearly ridiculous. In 1710 Maria was eight years old and was still to have an illegitimate child by Nicolaas Bruyns in 1717, with a marriage to Thomas Eysman and four children before she finally married Verkouter in 1728. Mr G. C. de Wet of the Cape Archives agrees that the date is 1710 but suggests that the clerk may have been confused by the 'thienuur' and inserted this as the year inadvertently. The will has been filed in the volume of wills dating from 1702-1714.

⁴² CJ. 2651 no. 48, 27.1.1719.

⁴³ MOOC I 3 / I no. 1 15. Liquidation account.

⁴⁴ Hoge p.93.

⁴⁵ MOOC 814 no. 94,4.4.1727.

⁴⁶ DRC krchives G1 812

⁴⁷ Paarl 15.2.1728.

⁴⁸ MOOC 8/3 nos. 36 and 95

⁴⁹ DRC Archives G1 1311.

⁵⁰ DRC Archives G1 1812.

⁵¹ Hoge, 13.2.1724.

Koebergen gen: de Modderfontein en de Draayhoek.⁵² In all probability the 1767 appearing in Hoge is a misprint for an earlier date.

Problems are once more in evidence when dealing with Clara the last child of Christiaan and Anna Bok. She was one of the two born in wedlock and her birth took place in Feb/March 1716. This is deduced as she was described as being six months when the inventory of her deceased father's estate was taken in August of that year. No baptism has been found. At the age of fifteen she was married to Johan Jurgen Fuchs and his name appears as such in the marriage register.⁵³ According to de Villiers/Pama and Hoge, he was also known as Vos. This state of affairs arose from the inability of the Dutch clerks to spell his name correctly and it is demonstrated by the two wills made by him. The first, executed before his marriage to Clara describes him as *'Johan Jurgen Vos van Weenen in Oostenrijk, siekelijk te bedde leggende*⁵⁴ but he was not too ill to sign his name very clearly *'Fuchs'*. In 1732 came the second will where the clerical error was repeated and he again signed *Fuchs*.⁵⁵ Vos was the Dutch translation of Fuchs.

The baptism of their son, Nicolaas has not been traced, nor does Hoge mention the date. Whether the child was recorded as Vos or Fuchs is therefore uncertain but probably as the former. Hoge states that it was as Vos that he married Henrietta Wilhelmina Wiederholdt. Again according to Hoge, Fuchs senior died in 1735.⁵⁶

After twenty years of widowhood, at the age of forty on 1st August 1756,⁵⁷ Clara married Gideon Slabber a youth of seventeen years, which seems difficult to believe. His baptism took place in the Cape Town Dutch Reformed Church on 5th April 1739, between Cornelia in 1736 and Pieter in 1741.⁵⁸ All efforts to trace an alternative Gideon who might have been the bridegroom have failed so that the fact of this marriage with such great disparity of age must apparently be accepted. Searches in the registers of Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Swartland have failed also to reveal any baptisms for children of this couple and it is possible that there were none.

The first will recorded for the Slabbers was executed two years after their marriage and not as was more usual at the same date.⁵⁹ Ten years later, in 1768 a codicil was added beneath the existing will bequeathing a 'male slave, four oxen and three horses' to Jasper Slabber, presumable Gideon's brother. A further amendment again on the same page but this time undated, granted freedom to two slave children, Filander and Kandara. The usual is no surprise when dealing with this family and the clerk omitted to insert the date when the will was lodged with the Orphan Chamber which makes the date of Gideon's death uncertain.

Records of Clara's death do exist but they appear to be in conflict. The inventory of the estate of *'wylen Clara Bok, weduwee wylen Gideon Slabber overleden den 16.5.1797'* was signed at Koeberg on 3rd July 1797.⁶⁰ Does the date 16th May 1797 refer to the death of Gideon or that of Clara? The *'wylen'* before her name suggests that it was she, but the possibility does exist that the clerk became confused when compiling this document and inserted *'wylen'* incorrectly before the Clara instead of merely before that of Gideon whose inventory this might well have been. This contention is strengthened by a record of Clara's death preserved in MOOC 612 which states that she died *'in the Swartland at the place of Stephanus Gaus on 19.10.1797'*. These documents are generally reliable whereas mistakes do occur in the making of wills.

⁵² C.52, 11.11.1760.

⁵³ DRC Archives, G1 1311.

⁵⁴ CJ. 2653no. 69,29.12-1729.

⁵⁵ CJ. 2605 no. 41, 8.10.1732.

⁵⁶ Hoge, p.105.

⁵⁷ DRC Archives, G1 1311.

⁵⁸ DRC Archives, G1 8/3.

⁵⁹ MOOC 7/1/19 no. 38, 1.10.1758.

⁶⁰ MOOC 8/22 no. 13, 3.7.1797.

The death of Clara brought to an end the first generation of Boks. The name of Geringer had long since disappeared from local records and he left no descendants. He will, however, remain preserved in history for his signature, and that of Christiaan Bok are to be found in that document signed by those freeburgers at the Cape who pledged their support to that most controversial of governors, Willem Adriaan van der Stel.

It would be interesting to discover how many hundreds, possibly thousands of people in this country can trace their origins to the property in Castle St. where the Indian slave girl lived with the two Germans two hundred and fifty years ago.

Note: Burials of the Bok family. Acting on a suggestion by Miss K. Vos, burials within the Dutch Reformed Church itself were researched. With the generous assistance of the Rev. H. C. K. Hopkins these records were consulted and it was discovered that Christiaan Bok himself, or a member of the family had purchased a burying place inside the existing church. In 1763 when these records commence (GI 14/1), this site was still in the hands of *'de erfgename Christiaan Bok'* and no. 116. It is therefore probable that those members of the family who died before that date had been buried there. In 1764 it was taken over by Lodewyk Fichtenaar who strangely, two years later, married Christiaan's granddaughter, Johanna, widow of Jan Hendrik Vos. Unfortunately no plan exists for locating these burial sites but in one or two cases remarks inserted in the records do throw some light on the problem. For example in the volume for 1776-1789 nos. 133/134 in the name of Michiel Christiaan Vos bear the following note *'op hierdie grave staan de pylare van het orgel'*. Since Vos did not die until 1825 an alternative site must have been allocated.