Although he died 250 years ago the attitude of Gerrit Gerrits of Oldenburg that marriage was an institution that could be dispensed with would have corresponded with what today are considered modern “progressive” attitudes. For 35 years he lived with Susanna of Bambaser and treated her as his wife yet he never raised her to that position. This fact he firmly states in his will made a week or two before he died in 1730. In this document he institutes, by his name, as his heirs, his surviving issue by Susanna with herself added, to receive an equal portion with each child.

He even went a step further in acknowledging the paternity of his “natuurlijke” children and his name appears in the existing Dutch Reformed Church registers as their father. The form of the entry is identical with that of legitimate issue with the father’s name followed by that of the mother and the children were not labelled in the entry as “onecht” which indeed they were. No explanation has been found for this attitude on the part of the church authorities in the five separate baptisms recorded. The children all bore the name of the father.

An illiterate man who managed only an X for his signature throughout his life, Gerrits is documented as a soldier from Oldenburg, a town and a small state lying between East Friesland and Bremen. In 1693 he was on loan as a kneegt to Willem ten Damme, senior surgeon and burger at the Cape for 1 year and appears for the first time as a burger/freeman in 1698.

Despite his illiteracy and his menial position in the ten Damme household, by 1700 he owned the state of the present Sendingsgestig in Long Street Cape Town and obtained a grant of 28 morgen “tussen Rondebosje en Roodebloem” called Altona in 1706. After he had sold this in 1714 he settled down on a smaller farm at Mowbray on the southern boundary of Valkenburg. This was a portion of the property Liesbeek and was described as “omtrent Rondebosje” in his will and here he died in 1730. The property was sold from his deceased estate to Rudolf Brits his son-in-law.

Attention now falls on the central figure of this study, Gerrit’s consort Susanna of Bambaser. Her place of origin has not been identified despite extensive research. The name is variously spelt as Bombaser and Bambaser in documents referring to her and in the Dutch Reformed Church baptismal registers she appears as of Macassar and of Madagascar. Neither Bambaser or Bombasa has to my knowledge been found as referring to any slave at the Cape and the location remains unsolved.

The first document that refers to Susanna is to be found in the volumes of Scheepenkennisse for 1695-1696 in the Deeds Registry, Cape Town (The volume is unpaginated and unnumbered but the document can be located next to Transfer 402 which does appear.) However it seems obvious that she had been at the Cape for a few years before 1696 for this document is in fact her emancipation from slavery, and it provides details of her life that would otherwise have remained hidden. It is a fascinating document and far more than the stereotyped freedom papers usually to be found, for Hugo de Goyer, the secretary or the Council of Policy which normally handles such matters, added that six weeks before his death, her late master Anthony of Angola had told her “synde geweest de lyfeigen van Anthony van Angola”, that he intended to free her from slavery. This freedom was to include that of her child, fathered by another man,

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1 [DR: This would have been Mombasa]
2 CJ 2604 No.58, S.4.1730
3 Dutch Reformed Church Registers (hereafter DRC) G1 8/1
4 CJ 2780
5 V.C. 39, 1698
6 OCF 2/328, 24.3.1700
7 OCF 2/176, 24.9.1706
8 CJ 2604 No.58, S.4.1730
9 Transfer 23/10.5.1737
10 CJ 2604 No.58, S.4.1730 and Scheepenkennisse 1695-1696
11 DRC G/1 8/1 30.8.1705
12 DRC G/1 8/1 28.5.1708
13 Mombasa
14 Scheepenkennisse 1695-1696
and her unborn child by Anthony himself. Unfortunately Anthony died before he could carry out his promise and his posthumous son was therefore born a slave. However, the matter of the proposed emancipation had apparently been common knowledge and two well-known burgers of Stellenbosch, where Anthony lived, Hans Jurgen Grimpe and Pieter van der Bijl came to the aid of Susanna and the deposition that they made to this effect bore sufficient weight for the authorities to grant the requested freedom forthwith.

It is obvious that Susanna was living with Anthony at the time of his death and that she had apparently taken the place of his former consort, Lysbet Angola who had died towards the end of 1693. Anthony was an enterprising freeblack who, with his partner Manuel of Angola had been granted some 57 morgen of land in the Mostertsdrift area of Stellenbosch in 1692. The census return for that year states that he had already worked the property for 9 years, not an unusual situation at that date, and that he possessed 4000 vines, 154 sheep and had sown and reaped both corn and rye with the assistance of one man slave: that he had a wife named as Lysbet, but no children. No slave woman is mentioned in this document and her appearance in the inventory of the deceased Anthony in September 1696 as “den slavin Susanna en haar kint” establishes the fact that she was acquired between those dates. Their humble little home was described, and the entire story of Anthony appears in The Slaves and Freeblacks of the Cape 1658-1700 by Dr A.J. Boeseken on pages 88-89.

After the death of Anthony, Susanna, with or without the two children, (there is no further mention of them) apparently made her way to the Cape for there is no evidence that Gerrits was ever resident in the Stellenbosch district. Somehow she came under his protection, and into his home, where she remained for the rest of her life of thirty-five years as his wife in all but name, and the mother of their five children. No evidence has to date been found of the exact date of Susanna’s death which took place after that of Gerrits in 1730.

Propinquity, then as now, is an important factor in the formation of family unions and the Gerrits menage was no exception to the rule. Across the Liesbeek River from the Gerrits home Liesbeek lay Koornhoop, the farm of Hans Jacob Brits of Stein, the South African founder of that family. Koornhoop was then a very modest home indeed judging from the deceased estate inventory of Dina, wife of Hans Jacob who died late in 1722. The inventory suggests that it was at most a two roomed dwelling if not perhaps even a single long all-purpose building and that their furnishings were minimal. Two slaves and 4 trek oxen provided the wherewithal for whatever agriculture was practised. The proximity of these two properties, Koornhoop and Liesbeek resulted in the marriage of Hermanus Gerrits to Anna Maria Brits, Maria Gerrits to Anna’s brother, Rudolf Brits and a liaison between Hilletje Gerrits and Cornelis Brits which produced Sophia Elisabeth Brits.

Details of the five children of Gerrits and Susanna, and their descendants now follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christina</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susanna</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerrit</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermanus</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 Ibid.
16 I/STB 18/1 No.20,7.1.1694
17 OSF 1/61, 15.10.1692
18 I/83
19 MOOC 8/1 No.16, 16.9.1696
20 MOOC 8/4 No.85, 23.11.1722
21 DRC. Gl 13/1 1712-1756 show no marriages in 1723 after October 19. The same difficulty arose with the marriage of Rudolf Brits/Maria Gerrits given in DV/P as 1722.
22 MOOC 8/5 No.32, 9.1.1731
Magdalena 8 months

The Alida appearing in De Villiers/Pama p.242 had obviously already died. Dina has been omitted entirely and Christina has been placed last instead of first. Her baptism c. 1717-1718, according to the above age, has also not been located in either Cape Town or Stellenbosch.

Hermanus died on his farm "Raapenberg gelegen aan ‘t Liesbeeksrivier" in mid-December 1730 aged 29 years. Of the five issue of Gerrits and Susanna only Sophia Elisabeth lived to a good age, namely 82, Hermanus and Maria died at 29 and 33 respectively,希尔特je as a very young woman and Susanna as an infant23. Raapenberg went to his widow, Anna Maria Brits who on 12.7.1733 married Claas Jonasz, a full black, the son of Claas Jonasz d’oude and Dina of Bima24. Shortly before the death of Hermanus, his brother-in-law, Rudolf Brits husband of Maria Gerrits, took over the Gerrits farm. Leeuweek thus creating a Brits/Gerrits enclave that stretched from Koornhoop of Hans Jacob Brits Sr. across the Liesbeek to the Black River which included Liesbeek and Raapenberg. Later these farms extended beyond the present Raapenberg railway station. The southern and northern boundaries of this little empire were roughly the present Rondebosch Common and Valkenburg.

Generally speaking the transactions in relation to these last two farms, which for a period became fused into one, are extremely complex and many problems arose. In 1773, with their transfer as a whole to Comelis de Waal from the estate of Anna Maria Brits25, the authorities were faced with finding a satisfactory solution to the distribution of her assets after her death in 17.12.1772 and the proceedings are of considerable genealogical interest. Those involved in the operation were the surviving children of Anna Maria and the heirs of her one deceased daughter and they were named as follows:

1. her daughter Christina Gerrits (cl) then married to Johan Andreas Tomas Kempf
2. her daughter, Dina Gerrits "burgeresse" c4
3. her sons Gerrit Gerrits c5 and Hermanus Gerrits c6
4. her sons by Claas Jonasz II namely Claas Jonasz III and Willem Comelis Jonasz.
5. the children of her deceased daughter Susanna Gerrits married to Johannes Mostert namely: Jan Christiana de Goede "getrouwd met Maria Magdalena Mostert" Hermanus Mostert and Johannes Jacobus Mostert2627.

Although Comelis de Waal, who already owned the adjoining farm Valkenburg became the registered owner of Liesbeek/Raapenberg in 1773, it seems obvious that Adam Frederick Koeleke, husband of Sophia Elisabeth Gerrits, b4, either leased or worked the windmill on this property from 1771-1781. To assist in this operation Koeleke, and after his death in 1776, Sophia Elisabeth herself, hired Niclaas Christiaan Rode as “Knecht in de wintmolen” as preserved contracts reveal28.

The children of Hermanus Gerrits and Anna Maria Brits:

cl  Christina Gerrits born c. 1717-1718 died 18.3.178929. She married (1) Hans Christian Wahl of Strelitz on 10.9.1757 and two sons were born of the marriage Hans Christian Christoffel bap. 23.7.1758 and Jan Nicolaas bap. 17.6.1760 not 1.6.1760 as in De Villiers/Pama p.1095. Her second marriage on 17.6.1764 produced no children; this husband, John Andreas Tomas Kempf was a tanner/wagon driver and their home was that part of town called “Kikvorsen eylant” now in the Caledon Square area of Cape Town. In the joint will of the couple made on 19.9.178330 Kempf acknowledged his “natuurlijke dogter de vrye persoon Clara Catharina" and made her his residual heir,

23 Ibid.
24 See Armoyn Claas of the Cape and her Family 1661-1733, Familia XVI, 4 p.84.
25 Transfer 45:3/23.2.1773.
26 There is a missing number 24 in the original text, but the following citation appears in the numbered references at the end: MOOC 6/1 p.105
27 Transfer 45:3/23.2.1773
28 Cj. 2906 No.75, 28.9.1773 - 12.3.1781. Contraktten. This windmill immortalised by Thomas Bowler as Clapperton’s Mill stood until 1903 on the present site of the Ennerdale Nursing Home, Berkley Road, Mowbray and had been in existence at least from 1760 and possibly for some thirty years before that date.
29 MOOC 6/1 p.224
30 MOOC 7/136 Unregistered wills, unpaginated, unnumbered and not chronological.
subject to a life usufruct of the estate in favour of his wife Christiana. Clara Christiana married twice, Johann Fredreick Herwig on 29.8.1784 and after his death in 1800 Georg Gottfried Schemer on 27.4.1801.

**c2**  
*Susanna Gerrits bap.* 25. 8.1720 married 7.5.1741 Johannes Mostert b3c2 (De Villiers/Pama p.596). Three children were born to the couple: 1. Maria Magdalena bap. 4.2.1742 who married Johannes de Goede who was baptised on 17.10. 1743 as Johannes Christiaan, the illegitimate son of Jacobina van Deventer and he only later assumed the name de Goede. 2. Johannes Jacobus Mostert bap. 2.6.1743 and married Maria Adriana de Kock. 3. Hermanus Mostert bap. 4.7.1745. No evidence of the date of death of Susanna Gerrits has been found other than the second marriage of her husband/widower on 24. .5. 1750.

**c3**  
*Dina Gerrits bap.* 7.6.1722 died 14 .2. 1795. Here there appears to be evidence of a genuine error in the baptismal register for the above date. According to the estate inventory of her father Hermanus Gerrits32 she was 9 years old in 1731 with her birthdate therefore in 1722. The only appropriate entry for her in this year reads as follows: “Dina, de vader Hermanus Direksz en Anna Brits, get: Hans Jacob Brits en Dina Olivier”. The witnesses were the parents of the mother and it is suggested that Dircksz was inadvertently written for Gerrits for no baptisms of any Dircksz issue appear in the registers before 1761. It seems likely that Dina did not marry for she appears as “de burgeresse Dina Gerrits” in her mother’s estate of 177333, and in the record of her death on 14.2.179534 she is plain Dina Gerrits with neither wife nor widow added. No will or estate inventory has been found.

**c4**  
*Alida Gerrits bap.* 23.6.1724 this child was not included in the father’s inventory of 1731 so was by then presumably dead.

**c5**  
*Gerrit Gerrits bap.* 14.7.1726. On 14.1.1726 he married Maria Magdalena Mostert (note: this is not the same Maria Magdalena appearing under c2) bap 19.11.1719 who had previously been married to Harmann Franke. Thirty-three years after their marriage Gerrit and Maria executed a will35 in which no Gerrits issue were mentioned as heirs, but only those of Maria’s first marriage to Franke. Gerrits estate, after the death of his wife, was to go to his brothers and sisters, Christina Kempf, Dina Gerrits, Hermanus Gerrits and the children of his dead sister Susanna36. The will was filed with the Orphan Chamber on 12.10.1794 but there is no evidence whether this date applied to the death of Gerrits or that of his wife. No record of the death of either occurs elsewhere in Cape records.

**c6**  
*Hermanus Gerrits bap.* 11.7.1728 married 7.3.1779 to Maria Loots, the widow of Izaak Meyer of Swellendam. Gerrits, or Gertse as he appears in the marriage register37, was also of Swellendam and was a bachelor of 51 to his wife’s 43 years. No evidence of any children, estate inventories wills or even dates of death of either husband or wife has been found.

**c7**  

From the available evidence it seems that by 1740 there were no male descendants of Hermanus Gerrits I, the son of Gerrits and Susanna of Bambaser. Great difficulty has been experienced in establishing the dates of death of both Gerrits and Brits issue owing to the absence of testamentary dispositions of these “will‐shy” families and whose members also to a large extent managed to escape being officially recorded as having died. Hilletje, Maria and Sophia Elisabeth,
the three daughters of Susanna of Bombase who lived to produce issue have left many
descendants in South Africa. Through them branches of the Carstens, Kock, Brits, Swanepoel,
Ricker, Pretorius, Louw, Becker and Bronkhorst families can be traced, but here only limited
descendants will appear.

Hilletje Gerrits bap. 20.5.1703. No evidence of her actual death has been found but it took place
before April 1730 for her father’s will made in that month mentions among his heirs “zyn
overledene dogter’s dogter, Sophia Brits genaam en sulx by plaatsvatting ofte representasie ...”.
Hilletje was unmarried and the joint will of this daughter of hers, Sophia Brits and her second
husband, Carel Joseph Kock in 1770 supplies the identity of Sophia’s father in these words: “so
verklaarde de testatrice (Sophia) dat ingevalle sy sonder kinderen nalaten mogh te overliden sy
alsdan aan haaren vader den burger Comelis Brits se oude ...”. Cornelis was the eldest surviving
son of the founder of the family Hans Jacob Brits of Koornhoop so conveniently near the Gerrits
farm on the other side of the Liesbeek. No baptism of this illegitimate daughter Sophia has come
to light and all documents concerning her are silent as to her age. Brits apparently did not deny
paternity for she bore his name.

This granddaughter of Susanna of Bombaser, Sophia Brits, contracted three marriages and
produced eight children. She married firstly, on 8.5.1740 Johannes Carstens b3 (DV/P p.133) and
of him Catharina Helena bap. 6.8.1741, Johan Frederick bap. 28.11.1743, Gideon bap. 19.6.1746
and Frans Matthys (no baptism found) were born. Gideon went to the east, Johan died young and
Frans Matthys left a son and a daughter by his wife Martha du Plooy; Catharina Helena married
Jan Christoffel Dell of Eisenach. All this is disclosed by the inventory of their grandmother Dell’s surname appears in different forms as Telle , Tille before it degenerated to Dill. Their
marriage was dissolved in 1771 after the birth of 8 children. Dill or Dell was a carpenter who
died on a Verwey farm in the Tygerberg in June 1779 with his ex-wife living in a single room in
Cape Town with the children. Two of the Dell daughters Anna Susanna bap. 24.1. 1762 and
Catharina Louisa bap. 13.4.1766 broke away from their German South African background and
married men of British and American descent. Certain Sinclair and MacDonald families in South
Africa today stem from Anna’s marriage to a Briton44.

After the death of Carstens Sophia married Carel Joseph Kock a tailor and by him had two sons
and two daughters, only one of these, Johan Hendrick survived to maturity45. Research has not
disclosed where in Cape Town Susanna lived during her first two marriages but her death in
1790 during her marriage with Johan Albrecht Schutz of Wessel whom she married on 9.2.1772
records this fact46.

As are many inventories this too was of some genealogical interest and imparts the information
that of her 8 issue by all three husbands only 3 were alive in 1790, Catharina Dell, Jan Carstens at
the Cape and Gideon Carstens in Samarang, and that there were very few descendants of the dead
children to be considered. These children, grandchildren, and her husband shared her estate, the
accounts for which fill half the volume for 1790-9147. An unusual feature is an alphabetical list of
those who purchased goods at the sale.

Schutz served with the DEIC from 1765 as a soldier/corporal then for two years as deputy
landdrost of Swellendam but his later occupation is unknown. He survived his wife by three
years dying in 1793 when according to Hoge (personalia p384) the Lutheran Church, to which he
belonged, had to pay for his funeral. There were no children of the marriage.

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38 CJ 2604 No.58, 5.4.1730
39 Ibid.
40 Number 38 is skipped in the original list of citations
41 MOOC 8/19 No.5, 17.3.1770
42 CJ 2935 No.242, 6.11.1771
43 MOOC 8/17 No.55, 8.6.1779
44 Information kindly supplied by David Mitchell
45 MOOC 8/19 No.65, 17.12.1790
46 Block 00 Nos. 3/4
47 MOOC 14/1/71 No.7
Maria Gemts bap. 30.8.1705 died 30.3.1738\textsuperscript{49}. At the age of 17 she married Rudolph Brits from Koornhoop. Their marriage given as on 5.12.1722 in DV/P has not been found. Baptised as Rudolphus on 24.10.1702 at Stellenbosch, where his father then lived, he also appeared as Adolf but more generally as Rudolf. He and Maria had six children the youngest of whom, Hans Jacob bap. 13.2.1724 and Gerrit bap. 24.3.1738 were both dead when the mother herself died in 1738\textsuperscript{49}. It seems that she died in childbirth. Their home, described in the estate inventory was a small two roomed dwelling “gelegen omtrent Rondebosje genaamt Liesbeek”\textsuperscript{50}. Their eldest child, Dina Brits bap. 9.6.1726 married Johannes Swanepoel\textsuperscript{b5} (DV/P p.949) and they had nine issue all of whom married. The only son of Rudolf and Maria, Hans Jacob after his grandfather bap. 2.1.1729 married Hester Engela van der Heyden and their two sons Rudolf and Gerrit between their marriages produced twelve sons to carry on the Brits name.

After the death of Maria Rudolf Brits married on 12.1.1740 Huibrecht Brand the widow of Christoffel Smit adding a further eight children many of whom were pioneers in the eastern districts of the Cape.

Sophia Elisabeth Gerrits bap. 28.5.1708, died in 1790, aged 82. Before her marriage she had an illegitimate daughter Elsje Cornelia allegedly by Johannes Stoet (Hoge. Personalia p.16). The girl was apparently adopted by Adam Frederick Koeleke who married her mother on 16.9.1736. Elsje married Johann Nicolaas Barends of Oldenburg who had been working as a mason for her father. Adam and Sophia had six children but their will\textsuperscript{51}\textsuperscript{52} reveals that by 1784 only Susanna who was married to Johannes Beck and a son Balthazar and his son Hermanus Frederick were surviving. It seems strange that there is no mention of Sophia’s granddaughter Anna Elisabeth daughter of Elsje who was certainly then still alive.

Susanna Gerrits bap. 26.6.1712 was the youngest child of Susanna of Bambaser and she died apparently unmarried before 1730.

Many descendants of Susanna from the unidentified birthplace and her faithful Gerrit Gerrits live in South Africa today.

Margaret Cairns

\textsuperscript{49} MOOC 8/9 No.6 (not No.4 as in index to that volume) 30.3.1738
\textsuperscript{49} MOOC 8/6 No.6, 30.3.1738
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid
\textsuperscript{51} There is no number 49 in the original text but the following citation appears in the list of references: CJ 2893 No.32, 13.10.1753
\textsuperscript{52} CJ 2638 No.55, 3.6.1784
References [AS THEY APPEAR IN THE ORIGINAL]
1. CJ 2604 No.58, 5.4.1730
2. Dutch Reformed Church Registers (hereafter DRC) G 1 8/1
3. CJ 2780
4. V.C. 39, 1698
5. OCF 2/328, 24.3.1700
6. OCF 2/176, 24.9.1706
7. CJ 2604 No.58, 5.4.1730
8. Transfer 23/10.5.1737
9. CJ 2604 No.58, 5.4.1730 and Schepenkennis 1695-1696
10. DRC G/1 8/1 30.8.1705
11. DRC G/1 8/1 28.5.1708
12. Schepenkennis 1695-1696
13. Ibid.
14. I/STB 18/1 No. 20, 7.1.1694
15. OSF 1/61, 15.10.1692
16. J 183
17. MOOC 8/1 No.16, 16.9.1696
18. MOOC 8/4 No.85, 23.11.1722
19. DRC G 13/1 1712-1756 show no marriages in 1723 after October 19. The same difficulty arose with the marriage of Rudolf Brits/Maria Gerrits given in DV/P as 1722.
20. MOOC 8/5 No.32, 9.1.1731
21. Ibid.
22. See Armoyn Claas of the Cape and her Family 1661-1733, Familia XVI, 4 p.84.
23. Transfer 4553/23.2.1773.
24. MOOC 6/1 p.105
25. Transfer 4543/23.2.1773
26. CJ 2906 No.75, 28.9.1773 - 12.3.1781 Contrakten. This windmill, immortalised by Thomas Bowler as Clapperton’s Mill stood until 1903 on the present site of the Ennerdale Nursing Home, Berkley Road, Mowbray and had been in existence at least from 1760 and possibly for some thirty years before that date.
27. MOOC 6/1 p.224
28. MOOC 7/136 Unregistered wills, unpaginated, unnumbered and not chronological.
29. MOOC 6/1 p.326
30. MOOC 8/5 No.32, 9.1.1731
31. Transfer 4543/23.2.1773
32. MOOC 6/1 p.326
33. CJ 2640 No.21, 24.3.1786
34. Ibid.
35. DRC G1 13/2 p.61
36. CJ 2604 No.58, 5.4.1730
37. Ibid.
38. NO NUMBER 38 IN ORIGINAL
39: MOOC 8/19 No.5, 17.3.1770
40. CJ 2935 No.242, 6.11.1771
41. MOOC 8/17 No.55, 8.6.1779
42. Information kindly supplied by David Mitchell
43. MOOC 8/19 No.65, 17.12.1790
44. Block 00 Nos. 3/4
45. MOOC 14/1/71 No.7
46. MOOC 8/9 No.6 (not No.4 as in index to that volume) 30.3.1738
47. MOOC 8/6 No.6, 30.3.1738
48. Ibid
49. CJ 2893 No.32, 13.10.1753
50. CJ 2638 No.55, 3.6.1784