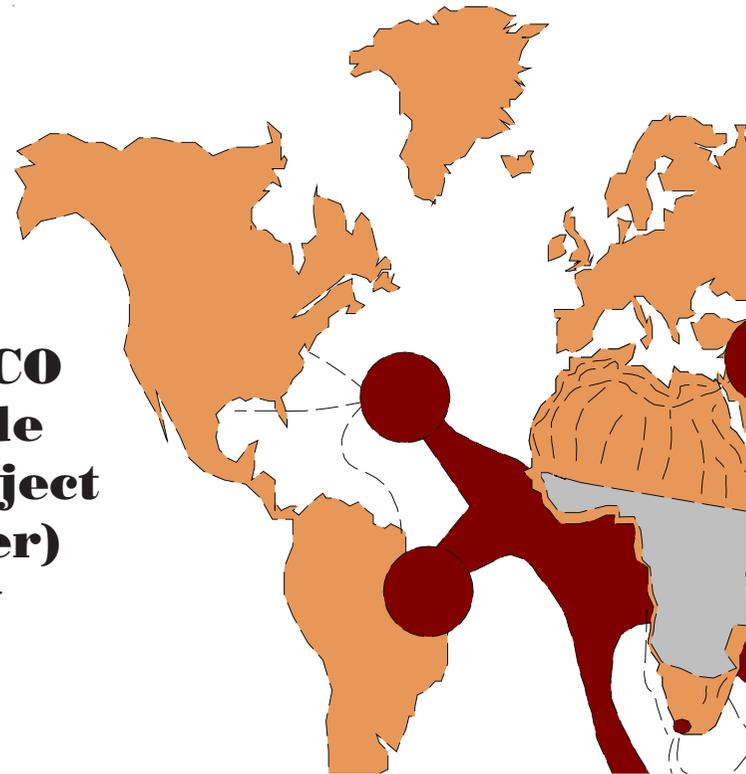

FROM DIASPORA TO DIORAMA

AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE ROUTES AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

**The UNESCO
Slave Trade
Route Project
(SA chapter)
Feasibility
study**



compiled by

Dr Robert C.-H. Shell

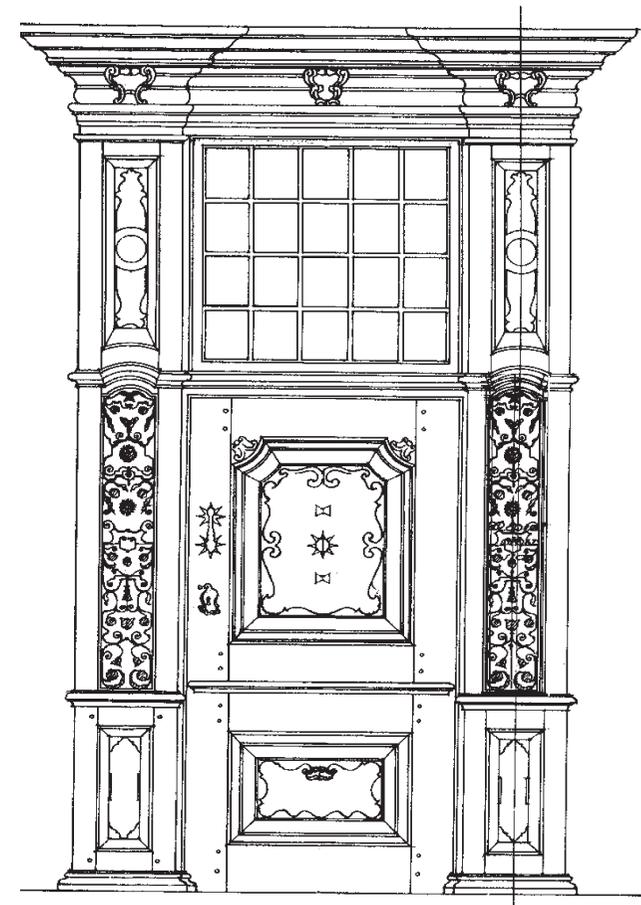
Behind Rangton's door: A Balinese wood-carver slave at Stellenbosch, 1673-1720

by
Prof Robert C.-H. Shell

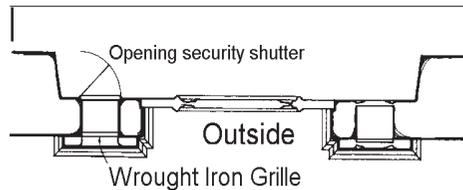
I have lived on the lip of insanity,
wanting to know reasons,
knocking at the door.
The door opens.
I've been knocking from the inside.

—Mevlana Jalal-e-Din Mevlavi Rumi,
Persian poet (1207 A.D. to 1273 A.D.)

When Nelson Mandela walked through the door of Groote Schuur for the first time, he might have experienced an epiphany. To have walked out of the bleakness of Victor Verster prison and then through the grand door of Groote Schuur must have been a curious experience. Many famous people went through the same door from Mahatma Gandhi to Harold MacMillan. The door at Groote Schuur has always been a source of inspiration in South African history. Cecil John Rhodes, for example, who had a great fondness for collecting Cape fitments, had bought that particular door from Samuel Elsevier's old homestead, Elsenburg at Stellenbosch for Groote Schuur.¹ However, Groote Schuur with its newly transferred door had burned down. Rhodes was obliged to live in the old slave quarters on the estate until the new Groote Schuur, under Sir



— External Elevation —



Detail of architrave, overhead view. Adapted detail from Pearce, *Eighteenth Century Architecture*, plate 84.

Herbert Baker's direction, was redesigned and rebuilt. While not everyone was happy with the redesign of Groote Schuur, everyone agreed that, at least, the new door was an excellent replica.

The unusual door always gets a mention in the classic works on Cape architecture. C. de Bosdari, for example, speculates that the elaborate front door, framed between grilles of wrought iron scroll work, was perhaps executed by a "Malay slave skilled in metal work."² De Bosdari was the first historian to suggest vernacular origins for the door.³ Hans Fransen and Mary Cook added their note of appreciation: "[t]he original front door was a magnificent piece of design, with wrought iron grilles in place of the middle panels of [a] typical mid-century architrave; it also had a deeper and finer head than the average"⁴ Elsenburg itself had suffered several fires. Perhaps the wrought iron work—which always survived the fires—was only a copy of an Ur-door, delicately carved in wood by a master carver when Elsenburg was built sometime after its original grant in 1698.

Several slaves came via the oceanic slave trade from regions in which the high art of woodcarving flourished. Thanks to the precise VOC conveyancing practices of slaves in the East and at the Cape, it is possible to reconstruct the lives of such slaves brought to the Cape in satisfying detail. We know of one possible contender for the creation of the door—Rangton of Bali—who was one of the highly skilled slaves belonging to Samuel Elsevier, the original grantee of Elsenburg.⁵

Rangton's roots

To begin, Rangton enters history when he was born—in 1673 on the island of Bali. From his name, one may derive that this event occurred in the northern forested slope of the Mt. Batukau in a village called Rangdoe. This tiny village is near to the town of Mageng in the present-day district of Bulèlèng on the northern shore of the island.

We must know something of the social and cultural history of Bali to appreciate the milieu from which Rangton emerged. From the seventh century [A.D.], Bali was the resort of Indic nobility fleeing from the tumult panning across the Indonesian archipelago. The mountainous island became a concentrated reservoir of nobility from one of Asia's greatest social creations, the Hindu-Buddhist Javanese state.⁶ They introduced Sanskrit into Bali as early as the 10th.⁷ These refugee nobles had first fled the colonial pressures of first Gujerati traders and other Muslims, and then another wave of foreigners—Portuguese Catholics. The ancient Indic nobility had migrated inland, where they established powerful highland empires based on intensive, terraced wet land rice agriculture. The sixteenth century is regarded as the brief "Golden Age" of Bali, when a single monarch held court in the southern city of Gèlgèl.⁸

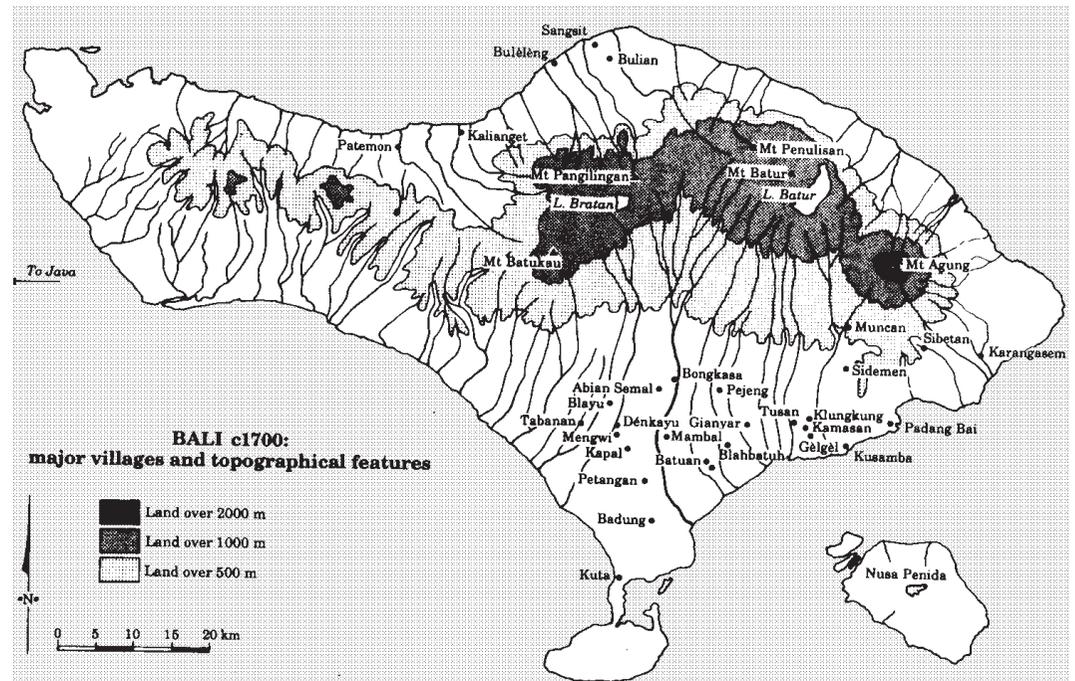
This rich, complex and finally, politically unified, milieu of refugee nobility and intensive agriculture received the Calvinist Dutch led by Cornelis Houtman in 1597. Initially, Hollanders were welcomed. First, they brought luxury trade goods desired by the elites of the island, the

Brahamen and *Pedanda*. Second, the Dutch were *not* Muslims—the traditional enemies of the Balinese. Third, the Dutch had no prohibitions against eating pork, much favored by the Balinese. Fourth, the Dutch interlopers were not Catholic and therefore also had no objections to meat being eaten on Fridays. It was for the same set of mundane, culinary reasons that the aristocratic Balinese elites had earlier welcomed the Buginese and Chinese as trading partners. That Hollanders and Balinese could share the same dining table was the basis—Henk Nordholt—wittily argues, for the establishment of a stable colonial relationship.

The topography of the island is important in understanding the changes Bali underwent as a result of subsequent colonial and slaving incursions. Before 1597, the center of all political gravity was in the wooded highlands, where intensive terraced agriculture was the mainstay. A rich artisanal culture also emerged around the courts, temples and villages. Woodcarving was a revered occupation then, and still is the principal handicraft of the island. Bali is also known for its giant Waringen trees, which are still held sacred by the Balinese. In short, wood and its human products were important aspects of the highland culture of Bali. Conceivably, Rangton was born into a highland family where such skills in woodcraft were passed on to each generation.⁹

In contrast, the sea, and all that came from it, was for both the commoners and court of Bali, a source of evil. All evil spirits—*de Buta Kala*—originated from the sea and crept up onto the land. The man-eating sea god, *Batara Baruna*, especially, became associated in the minds of ordinary Balinese with the oceanic slave trade.¹⁰ The Balinese were therefore different from other Indonesian people, such as the *Orang Laut* (the people of the sea), who made their living from fishing and who were scattered all over the archipelago, some of whom also came to the Cape and became its fishermen. Whatever the Balinese aspired to it was neither the sea, nor its commerce. They associated the sea with flight, bad luck, evil spirits and a rapacious slave trade. Consequently, the lower orders and traders came to dominate the lowlands and coastal areas. There were in 1700 few ports as one can see in the accompanying map. The collective memory of the Balinese people insisted that only evil came from the sea, a point to which we will return in regarding Rangton's move to Stellenbosch. While most Cape freed slaves turned to Cape Town and fishing, Rangton, a highland Balinese woodcarver, would turn his back on the sea and go the inland town of Stellenbosch.¹¹

The Balinese interior was forbidden to foreigners. Early traders who did enter the interior were obliged to stay for many years. For example, one Portuguese adventurer who arrived in 1586 was obliged to stay for eleven years in the court of Gèlgèl, with





its human “cabinet of curiosities” of fifty deformed humans and dwarfs who represented to the court the outside world. Nordholt avers that it was the *pedandas*’ [priests]’ insistence that foreigners stay at the coast which allowed the Balinese nobility to enjoy a protracted, if ultimately permeable, independence. The Dutch East India Company did not occupy Bali for the simple reason that it was so fiercely defended. Gold-tipped spears and long range blow pipes were among the Balinese kingdoms’ most effective lines of defense as the accompanying picture of the armoured entourage of the Balinese king suggests.

Bali had many similarities to Holland: these included high population density—almost 300,000 people—intensive irrigation and also a high culture. Perhaps it was because of these similarities that the Dutch were so smitten by the place. In any event, they called it “the young Holland” and clearly coveted the island.¹²

It was however, only after thirty crippling wars and massacres that the Dutch finally and convincingly conquered Bali as late as 1908, ignoring some feeble international protest from as far afield as an ex-Dutch colony, New York.¹³

Despite a prolonged Balinese sovereignty, 1597-1908, the presence of aggressive *independent* Dutch interlopers transformed the island in many ways. There were four inter-related effects of the pre 1908 colonial intrusions. First, the demand for Balinese slaves grew as the Dutch, Chinese and Bouginese brought in trade goods—mainly opium and guns—and started exporting the descendants of the most ancient nobility of the archipelago. New powerful autochthonous coastal trading lineages emerged whose trading and social aspirations were fixed on the prestigious old empire. For such people, wealth could be obtained through slaving, while respectability could be achieved through a judicious intermarriage with the declining highland gentry. In this way, slaving wars first came to Bali. Bali went through that terrible transition—familiar to historians of Africa—when a society begins by using prisoners-of-war as slaves, and ends by going to war solely to obtain slaves. This was partly a result of the Dutch who rapidly rearranged the trade routes of the archipelago.¹⁴ The routes rendered Bali into a prestigious backwater, the main reservoir for male slave labor and also the preferred source in the archipelago for concubines. In the accompanying illustration, the proximity of the women’s genitalia to the head of the Dutchman is a reversal of propriety, showing that the Europeans had low status in Balinese eyes.

No conquering power could have more obvious symbolism: if one was going to have a commercial empire, one might as well turn the nobility of the archipelago into export commodities. Bali became the illegal, but preferred, “homeland” labor reservoir of the new Holland—Batavia.

Second, a process of sub-infeudation in Bali began as raided polities sought protection from the remnants of the old kingdom. Sinews of clientage thickened as the island endured these new tensions. Third, some political power moved from the central agricultural highlands to the new trading littoral. Highland agriculture never lost its importance, but the centers of power and

wealth became more diffuse. After 1622 small pockets of power could also be found on the periphery of the island. Opium, European cannon, and mercenaries—drawn from the marines of the VOC and freeburghers of nearby Batavia and some of the spice islands—helped constitute these new potent coastal lineages.¹⁵

A fourth result of the colonial intrusion was the degradation of juridical morality of the island. According to contemporaries, Balinese people were sold like “hens.” The “smallest mistake, the breaking of a glass or a bottle” could result in enslavement. Even the romantic Balinese cock fights were connected with slavery. Balinese slaves, partly because of their beauty, their artisanal skills and their non-Muslim eating habits quickly became the favored slaves of the Chinese, Dutch and Buginese throughout the archipelago. A seventeenth century depiction of a Balinese woman shows how closely she approximated to the somatic and aesthetic norms of Europe, even classical Greece.

As a consequence of this new demand for Balinese slaves, the island quickly became one of the main slaving *entrepôts* of the archipelago. Approximately 1,400 Balinese slaves were imported to the Cape in the period from 1652 to 1795. By the nineteenth century, Balinese were still being exported as far afield as Mauritius. Two and a half centuries of slaving led A. van der Kraan, a Dutch scholar in sharp disagreement with the more sanguine Swellengrebel view of Dutch/Balinese relationships, to characterize Bali as “in a state of permanent, institutionalized disorder.” Just over a hundred thousand Balinese slaves—a figure based on the most conservative estimates—were exported.

There were four classes of Balinese slaves: (1) prisoners-of-war (2) widows and daughters (3) the *mort vivant* (literally the living dead, people condemned to death, reprieved and sold into slavery) and (4) people who were forced to surrender themselves into slavery because of personal debt. It is possible that Rangton came out of the first group, who were, according to Nordholt, in the majority. But it is also possible that he was enslaved because of the last reason—gambling debts. To understand these processes, we must know something of the first slaving king.

The person who probably enslaved Rangton

When the Dutch occupied the Cape in 1652, Bali was in the midst of a civil war. At the center of this war was the figure of a parvenu king, Gusti Pañji Sakti. He fought for suzerainty over the Bulèlèng, in the area known as the *Den Bukit*, in the foothills of the mountain where Rangton was born. The future king of Northern Bali was of low social origin. He was helped in his rise to power by his own ruthlessness and a few independent Dutch slaving mercenaries. Any Dutchmen who attempted to bypass Pañji Sakti in foolhardy attempts at independent slave-trading in the interior were summarily executed. Two Dutchmen, skipper Hornbeek and burgher Andries Hardy, for example, were executed in public by blowpipe in front of the King’s house in 1664.





Such executions were necessary since unlicensed independent slave traders had inadvertently enslaved some of the king's followers. In the following years, the Gusti hired two Dutch *shahbandars* (harbor masters).

They were Messrs. Mossel and Michiel; both were "vitaly interested in Western technology", April 28, 2000 i.e. guns. Jan Troet, a free burgher of Dutch descent born in Ambon, who regarded the king as "his elder brother" was the man who introduced Pañji Sakti to modern weapons and how to build fortifications. He was put to death in 1672 or 1673, the year of Rangton's birth. Francois Valentijn, who later stayed with Troet's widow in Ambon, immortalized Troet's tale. The betrayal retarded Dutch slaving activity in Bali, but Chinese traders, stationed at the port of Bulèlèng—the port nearest to Rangton's village—took up the slack. Troet's story is important, because it was his written reports as a burgher and complaints to the VOC about Balinese slave *amuck*¹⁶ runners that led to the first VOC legislation in 1665 forbidding the ownership of Balinese slaves by *all* Company employees in *all* Dutch possessions.¹⁷

When Rangton was born in 1673, the first Balinese civil war was drawing to a close. In 1683, when Rangton was about nine years old, G.G. Maetsuyker recorded that Gusti Pañji Sakti was the king "van Billilly (of Bulèlèng) in the land of Bali, the most powerful of all his neighbors." By 1687, one may conclude that the civil strife was over. By 1708, despite rumors of his demise, the Balinese king was exporting 200-300 slaves per annum. The history of the region and periodization of the slave wars all confirm that Rangton was most probably enslaved in the turbulent time of Gusti Pañji Sakti's rise to, and consolidation of, slave-trading power.

If Rangton was captured in a slaving war, his lot was first to be isolated within his community and then sold to an overseas trader. We do not know how long that period was.¹⁸ Another possibility exists. In seventeenth century Bali, the king "even helped put people in debt by staging large cockfights in their capitals. The passion and extravagance encouraged by this exciting sport led many peasants to bet more than they could afford...at the end of the day...many peasants had no home or family to return to. They, their wives and children would [then] be sold in Java." Be that as it may, his probable price in Bali was about 18 Rixdollars, less than a third of his initial Cape price.

He was then transhipped to Batavia either on an independent Dutch trading ship, or more probably on a Chinese junk, since it was illegal for any Dutch East India company employee to import Balinese slaves into Batavia. That middle passage—with 200 to 300 slaves crowding a single ship—was mercifully short. Java's southern tip is one nautical mile from Bali. Deportation from the island was the worst nightmare for a Balinese. We can only imagine what Rangton's state of mind was at this—the end of the first phase of his life. The noble historical background of the island would suggest that his hitherto, undisturbed woodcarving life in the shadow of serene mountains must have been shattered. Despite his abrupt deracination, he would fashion a life in his new home doing much the same as he did at in Bali. This was unquestionably part of Rangton's great triumph.

Rangton's first European owner

Rangton's buyer in Batavia was Jacob Joppe de Jonge van Maaslandshuijs, a skipper on the *De Swaag*, who later served as a *schout-bij-nacht* (rear-admiral) on a Dutch East India ship, the *Cattendijk*. We know too little about the shadowy figure of Jacob Joppe, but what we do know is that he was involved in the shadowy illegal world of private slave trading at the Cape from about 1690. He rapidly became one of the most active such slave traders at the Cape. Like other illegal slave traders, he left a confusing trail in the records. He had arrived at the Cape in 1690 from Batavia and was trading slaves as soon as he landed. He was involved in more than 30 slave transactions—undoubtedly an underestimation—in the period from 1690 to 1704.

One must understand that the purchase price of a single slave was equivalent to the Dutch East India Company salary for one year. He also acted as an agent for East Indies slave traders. He married well. On the 7 October 1691, he married Maria Botma, the fifteen-year old granddaughter of the first Cape freeburgher,¹⁹ of whom he had, according to a 1698 manumission request, at least one son. He bought two ships from the Company, the fate of which we cannot trace, but which he used to service the fleets in the roads, perhaps bumboats to unload illegal slaves. It was probably through his wife that he acquired the sea front property on Zee Straat in Cape Town which he sold in 1695 for 1,200 Rixdollars. He made his name in Cape official society by apprehending a British slaver—*The Amy*—off Saldanha Bay in 1693 while stationed on the Cape slaver, the *Tamboer*. While stationed on the same ship, the *Tamboer*, he sold a slave, Joseph van Batavia, to Christian Freser late in the slaving season in December for a record 115 Rixdollars. In short, he made both his fame and fortune through the slave trade, but he did so under the burgher-friendly regime of Simon van der Stel.

It was in Jakarta that Jans Jacob Joppe de Jonge met and bought Rangton, probably for a price considerably higher than 18 Rixdollars and from Chinese middlemen. The skipper embarked with all his slaves a few days before sailing on the 2 November 1697. Following the 1664 assassination of two Dutch slave traders in Bali and on receipt of Troet's reports, the Company had forbade [*verbod*] all their employees from owning Balinese slaves in all the Dutch areas. This legislation first became effective in 1665. After 1685 no Balinese slaves above the age of 12 could be imported. There was also comprehensive, and what J. Fox terms “critically important legislation” passed on 12 October 1688. This was an unambiguous statute against the import and export of Balinese slaves. In the 1688 legislation, even stricter rules were placed on voyages to Bali that might be used to obtain Balinese slaves. Jans Jacob de Jonge therefore *had* to disguise Rangton's origin even while in Batavian waters.

We therefore can state that the skipper must have “smuggled” Rangton out of Batavia on board

the *Swaag* on two counts. First, the import, export and sale of slaves from Bali was forbidden throughout the Dutch empire until 1720 (after which Balinese slaves were heavily taxed). Second, the sale of *any* slaves from homeward bound officers to Cape slave owners were subject to numerous regulations for obvious reasons of cargo space, but also insurance of such slave cargo. Only the first prohibition explains why a “Ramtom van Matije” and not a “Rangton van Bali” was recorded as being sold to Samuel Elsevier, the official charged with the welfare of all slaves at the Cape, on the 27th of January, 1698. It was only in the early years of the eighteenth century, that the Company began to relax its edicts of its officers participating in the slave trade to the Cape. For example, only on the 24th August 1700, did it become legal to take “one or two slaves” to the Cape. According to Dutch Batavian law, the seller always also had to provide the slave’s origin on the *Transporten* (the conveyancing document). De Jonge rather loosely complied by using the town nearest to Rangton’s birthplace, but omitted to mention the forbidden origin, namely Bali. Two other slaves sold to Samuel Elsevier by de Jonge also had their origins suppressed. Perhaps they too were from the forbidden island of Bali.

An unusual voyage to the Cape

The *Swaag* was a 396 ton flute built in 1692, which called at the Cape in 1695, carrying 58 seafaring personnel and 45 marines on its outward bound voyage. Anthonie Chef was then captain. De Jonge was not on board. 103 was its normal complement. Thereafter, nothing the *Swaag* did was normal. For instance, it never carried the same large complement of crew. The ship appeared briefly at the Cape in June and July of 1696, carrying only 47 men and many slaves, some of whom were sold at the Cape by Jacob de Jonge, its new skipper. Others were sold by conniving crew members. After this voyage the flute stayed in Eastern and Cape waters. Most of De Jonge’s slaves were traded at the Cape while he was master of the *Swaag*.

The 1697/1698 Cape-bound voyage of the *Swaag* was therefore “unusual” for an Indiaman on several counts. First, it returned to Batavia after calling at the Cape and thereafter came back and stayed at the refreshment station for over a year. Second, the voyage which landed Rangton at the Cape is not recorded in the authoritative *Dutch Asiatic Shipping*. The compilers *do* list voyages which only came to the Cape in this period. This also enabled one to say that the voyage was “unusual.” That the ship was not recorded means we cannot know its complement or passengers, and from those figures exactly calculate its illegal cargo of slaves. Gerrit Schutte is right when he says that we do not know when the *Swaag* arrived in 1698. But we do know when the rest of the homeward bound fleet arrived from Batavia, namely on the 17 February 1698. We also know that the eight ships of the homeward bound fleet left Batavia on the 30th of November, 1697. Rangton probably boarded the small ship in the last days of October. The *Swaag* left Batavia on the 2 November, 1697 and had arrived well ahead of the fleet, risking the November monsoons. This was yet another reason for claiming the voyage was “unusual”. The *Swaag* did not sail with the fleet although it probably followed the usual routes back to the Cape.

We know little of the details of the voyage except its probable length, two months and seven days. We do know from Charles Randolph Boxer, the great imperial historian, that life on board a typical Indiaman was exceedingly rough: “Picturesque from the outside, they were cold, ill-ventilated and dank inside. The soldiers and sailors lived in the confined spaces between decks, where they swung their hammocks, kept their sea chests and messed together. Light and ventilation came through a few hatches and gun ports, which often had to be closed in wet or stormy weather, thus making the living quarters insufferably hot when the ship was in the tropics...the life of a Dutch sailor was apt to be nasty, brutish and short.”

Thousands of cockroaches must have further confounded the conditions of the voyage. All Balinese also viewed the sea with fear. The ship was probably strictly run. We know that de Jonge had survived a mutiny. He was thus probably a fiercely stern, but canny skipper. If Rangton was allowed on deck, the first view that he would have had of his new “home” was Table valley with its heavily populated gallows and crucified slaves at present day Greenpoint. Then the castle would have come into view. *De Swaag* might have the roads to itself as the fleets were still to arrive. On the voyage, Rangton had three slaves with him as companions. All would be sold to Samuel Elsevier, who probably was rowed out to the ship.

We know that Elsevier had boarded another ship in person in 1698 and extorted at least five slaves from the Captain for himself, but also twenty for the Governor. Let us imagine that de Jonge said to the new Fiscal whom de Jonge had never seen at the Cape: “I have four prime Balinese slaves for sale.” Elsevier could then have appeared shocked: “Balinese slaves! Do you not know there are numerous *plakkaats* against trade in Balinese slaves. I will however, on this occasion, save you from certain trouble by buying them myself, &c.&c.” Elsevier did buy four slaves from de Jonge at a price well below the average of that year.

On the 7th February 1698, 10 days before the arrival of the return fleet, the Cape Council of Policy wrote to Batavia that they had decided to send the *Swaag* back to Batavia. Why could they not wait for the fleet to come in, bringing despatches and news etc.? A probable explanation is that De Jonge had already made his unpopular views known or had somehow antagonized Elsevier. Unreasonably early sailing orders were a routine punishment. In any event, this decision panicked de Jonge. On the same day, de Jonge conditionally manumitted a slave, Francois of the Coast [of Coromandel] who “spoke Nederlands reasonably well and who had provided faithful service.”

The slave was recorded as being sold off the *Swaag*. This was no ordinary manumission, but an attempt to rid himself of a slave, for which he could not find a buyer. In the event of De Jonge’s death, the slave was to serve de Jonge’s son, for four years. On the following day, he sold a 28 year old slave, Ansel van Banda to Jan Wessels, a freeburgher, for 100 Rixdollars. One should notice the high price to a free burgher. Here he was acting as agent for N. de Vos, stationed in Japan, who was the “real” owner. Fantastically early sailing orders were both a reprimand for a skipper, but for a slave trader—who had to find a market quickly for his

slaves—they were a punishment.

De Jonge survived a mutiny and went on to become a rear admiral. In that capacity he revisited the Cape in 1702 in command of the 759 ton *Kattendijk*. Again, he sold slaves off the ship, but unlike his earlier visits when he sold almost exclusively to the top Company officials, now he mostly sold to the burgher elite. He did not deal with Elsevier at all. Most of his customers were still members of the new Governor's circle. For instance, on the 8th March, he sold the 23 year-old Pieter van Mallebar to Claas Hendriks Diepenaauw for eighty Rixdollars. On the 20th of the same month, he sold the 40 year old slave, November from Cochin.

But he now listed himself as a skipper of the *Waterman*, based at the Cape [*alhier bescheiden*]. He sold a 40 year old slave to Guilliam Heems, one of the town councilors appointed by Willem Adriaan van de Stel. On the following day he sold Mombi van Macassar to Jan Visser, a freeburgher, and also sold Caspar of Mallebar to Captain Olof Bergh. Jacob Joppe de Jonge then quit the Cape. He is not listed in the *monsterrollen* of the following year, although the phrase *alhier bescheiden* would suggest that he would be listed in that source. Of de Jonge's young wife and young son we learn nothing further. Evidently, they too did not stay at the Cape. Like another contemporary Cape slave trader, he returned to the metropole with his fortune, young wife and family.²⁰

Rangton's second owner: Samuel Elsevier van den Haag

The *Swaag* arrived at the Cape sometime before the 10th January 1698. We know this because Jonge started selling slaves on that day. The *Swaag's* voyage was at least in part a slaving voyage, as Prof. Schutte has correctly pointed out, since Rangton was not the only slave recorded being sold off this ship.

On this 1698 oceanic trade sale transfer, Rangton was listed as being 25 years old and was bought for 60 Rixdollars, which was well under the normal price for a slave from Bali in his prime, certainly low for a skilled carpenter or cabinet maker. How do we explain this? Samuel Elsevier was a powerful man at the Cape, the Governor elect's right-hand man. Since Rangton died intestate and by legal default left all his goods and money to his owner's family, we need to know something about the Elsevier household as well. It is conceivable that Elsevier owed his appointment to the fact that he was married into the fabulously wealthy Six family from Amsterdam, who were also intermarried with the van der Stels and the Baxes. Perhaps it also explains the other slaves de Jonge also sold cheaply to Elsevier, Titus van Macassar, Jan van Kissen and Francis from an unknown origin, all 20 years old.

These prime slaves altogether cost 200 Rixdollars, also well below the average. The average purchase price of all slaves sold to Elsevier was 62 Rixdollars, while the average purchase price of all other slaves in the same period sold to other people was 70 Rixdollars. Either Elsevier was

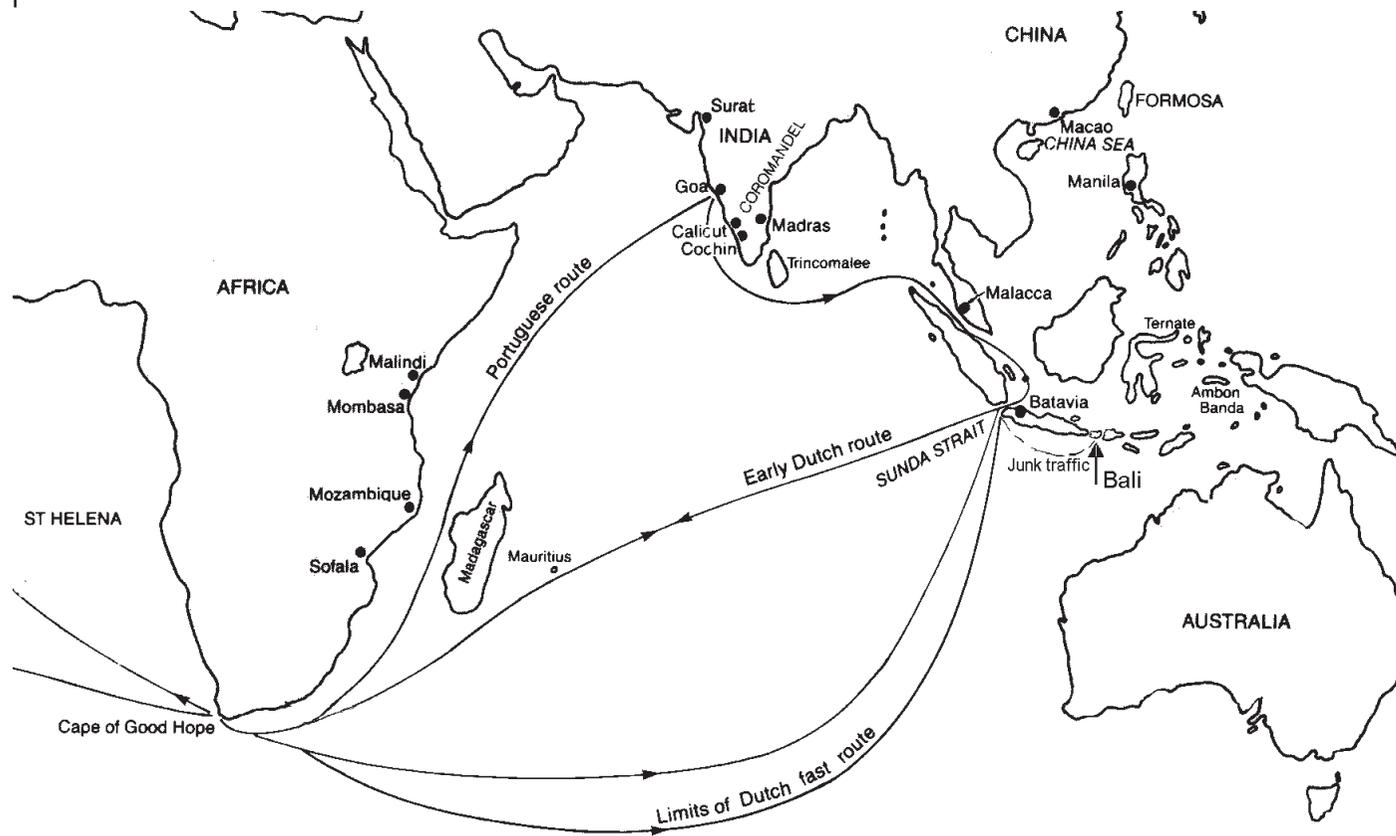
a consistent driver of good bargains, or he was using his political power to obtain slaves inexpensively by dispensing slave trading privileges in return for a slave or two. We know from an independent English Captain, Matthew Loewth, that Elsevier extorted 5 slaves from a foreign Captain for himself, 20 for the governor and 5 for Blesius in the same year that Rangton was bought. None of these slaves were legally recorded in the Deeds office transfers to Elsevier. Matthew Loewth complained in his log that the rest of his slaves had to be sold at such an extremely low cost “which Indeed is but giving away [sic].” We also know from other independent sources—the baptismal and manumission records—that Elsevier owned slaves for which there is no recorded transfer. Of course, he might have brought personal slaves with him from Ceylon. This was allowed but not recorded. There also was no Cape system of recording ownership of slaves born in one’s house. We also know that Elsevier had at least two of these. In short, Samuel Elsevier was known both for his aggressive and unscrupulous acquisition of slaves.

The deeds office transperten reveal that Elsevier bought and sold *at least* twenty eight slaves. One estimate puts his labor holdings as no less than 80 men, knechts and slaves.²¹

These acquisitive attitudes applied to landed property as well. Simon van der Stel had granted Samuel Elsevier a large farm at Stellenbosch, the famous 110 Morgen *Elsenburg* which Rangton, would in the normal course of his carpentry duties have visited. *Elsenburg* was only subdivided and sold by Elsevier’s agents in 1718. An Elsevier slave was sold off the farm as late as 1721. Elsevier was, with the exception of Fiscal Boers, the most unpopular Fiscal at the Cape. Unlike Boers who exposed the corruption of the Cape burghers, Samuel Elsevier lived off his own corruption. He was exemplar of what Max Weber termed the prebendial mentality. For instance, he had boasted that in a few years the Cape could do without any freeburghers at all!²²

He came to the Cape in 19 April 1697 on the *Ijsselmonde* after years of Company experience in the East. Simon van der Stel granted him a farm almost shortly after he arrived. He soon was granted an additional town property by the Commissioner Daniël Heyns. Willem Adriaan van der Stel expanded Elsevier’s original farm grant in 1701. Rangton therefore was one of the first slaves whom Elsevier purchased at the Cape. Rangton would have met Samuel Elsevier’s daughter, Johanna Constantia Elsevier who came to play a part in Rangton’s later Stellenbosch period.²³ She had been born in Sri Lanka in 1685. Johanna Constantia was therefore about 13 when she met Rangton. Her mother’s name was Anna Maria Six de Chantelier who was supposed to have died on 4 April 1689.

Elsevier himself arrived at the Cape with his second wife, Anna Christina Mulder, whom he had married in 1691, but who died in 1699. Rangton’s mistress—in the servitude sense—in his first years in the colony was therefore the young daughter, Johanna Constantia, who must have run the house until 1703 when Elsevier married Maria Wasteau. This third marriage was fated to last only two years. We do not know how it ended. Samuel Elsevier was recalled to the Netherlands in 1708 as a result of personal corruption and never returned, although he desperately wanted to stay at the Cape for “family” reasons. His plea to stay at the Cape as a



free burgher was refused and he left the Cape on the 23 March 1708.²⁴

Through his expulsion, Elsevier was forced to leave his “family”—personal relatives and slaves. His sickly son, Jan Elsevier, had died in 1706. On the thirteenth of February of 1707, his twenty-two year old daughter, Johanna Constantia, had married the 43 year old Stellenbosch church minister, Henricus Beck, Samuel Elsevier’s neighbor and a plantation owner in his own right. The marriage was childless. The Elsevier children thereafter lived as neighbors in Kerkstraat in Stellenbosch, the daughter and her husband living in the famous *Pastorie*. Her deceased brother had lived on the same street. There the Beck/Elsevier couple lived in some comfort until

Stellenbosch and their church burnt down in 1711. Services had to be held in the tiny pastorie until the church could be rebuilt. Possibly Rangton would have been the most likely person to be called in to help rebuild.

Rangton stayed in Cape Town from 1698 to 1712. Astonishingly, for four years after Elsevier’s expulsion Rangton had no owner *in situ* in Cape Town. Perhaps he lived a life of semi independence in Table Valley in this period while his absentee owner lived off Rangton’s earnings and that of his other slaves. There was no official record of slaves being hired out at this time. Although Elsevier had a few of his slaves baptized, Rangton was not among them. All we may say, on the basis of the Dutch Reformed Church records is that he was not converted to Christianity or baptized, nor did he stand as a witness in church. There is little on his religious life. We may deduce that he was neither Muslim nor Christian. Arguing from his Balinese

background, he was probably a Hindu. Of his personal form of worship, we can also say nothing. There is nothing in his inventories of a religious nature.

Free at last

Rangton freed himself on the 9th May 1712 at the age of 39 for 100 Rixdollars. We now know that this must have been decided in 1711 on the instructions of Isaac Johannes Lamotius and Jan van Hoorn, agents acting for Samuel Elsevier since Van Hoorn, a visiting Commissioner, had died in 1711. Yet Rangton's manumission document, with Van Hoorn's signature, is dated in the following year. Van Hoorn must have left the date blank on the manumission deed. Four other slaves of Elsevier had been manumitted in 1711 on the same set of instructions. Rangton was the only Elsevier slave who had to pay for his freedom. Rangton's delayed manumission—relative to the household slaves of Elsevier—implied that he had to earn the manumission money between 1711 and when he was freed in the following year. One notes that the manumission price (Rds. 100) was far higher than the price Elsevier had paid Jacob Joppe de Jonge in 1698 (60 Rds).

In Catholic slave societies a slave had the right of *Coartación*: the right to buy one's freedom at cost. At the Cape this did not apply in the seventeenth, eighteenth, or early nineteenth centuries. Moreover, one cannot help noticing that the money Elsevier had ceded to his two adult female household slaves (each obtained 50 Rds.) was exactly the amount extracted from Rangton. Elsevier's Cape Town property was subdivided and sold for 5,600 Cape Guilders early in 1712. Perhaps Rangton was a resident in one of them up to their sale, perhaps preparing them for sale and thereby earning some money. Two Cape Town free blacks, Jantje Alem and Lampe van Batavia stood as his personal guarantors. We know little of these two people—surely his friends—except that they could not sign their names. They never owned any property. We can therefore probably assume that Rangton was still living in Cape Town at the moment of his freedom.

Rangton's subsequent life in Stellenbosch

Once free, Rangton made two key decisions. First, he decided to move to Stellenbosch. That decision required official permission since Stellenbosch was a different district. The first decision has two possible explanations. First, he might have wanted to move away from the port. As indicated earlier, the Balinese believed that nothing good came from the sea. From Nordholt's work, we learn that to the Balinese, the oceanic slave trade was a confirmation of this ancient legend. Rangton had not only endured the slave trade but had to live inside the pocket of one of the Cape's most acquisitive slave traders. He also could have wanted some sort of patronage from the relicts of his owner's family, who all lived at Stellenbosch. Perhaps both reasons played a part in his decision to move.

Second, he bought a gun. Cape slaves were not allowed to own or even carry guns. His second decision could also have had several explanations. First, he might have felt that a gun was a

primary symbol of freedom, or alternatively he could have been obliged to carry a gun as part of the responsibilities of freedom, or more simply, he might have felt that he needed one for personal protection in the violent little colony. Francois van Mallebar, another contemporary free black who also died intestate, was also well armed. Francois owned a similar gun, a powder horn, *two* sabres and a *port-apee*. These were items missing from Rangton's probate documents. Francois' inventory, which included *more* weapons than the bare minimum required for the militia parade, would seem to suggest that some free blacks did indulge in the purchase of deadly weapons for their own sake. After 1735 the censuses reflect that free blacks no longer own weapons. Whether this development was by decree or due to poverty is beyond this paper.²⁵

We know from the Stellenbosch *opgaafs* that Rangton did not buy a slave, a horse, cattle or any landed property. We also know from the receiver of land revenue books that he did not apply for a salt-collecting license, a loan farm, hunting or grazing permit. Yet Rangton's manumission costs, his purchases and his move to another district all point to him having some money at the moment of his freedom. According to the tax lists, Rangton was in Stellenbosch in the same year as he was manumitted. Perhaps he lived for a time on Elsevier's farm or with his ex-owner's daughter, by then married to Henricus Beck, briefly the minister to both Stellenbosch and Drakenstein. The decision to move conceivably saved his life as many Cape Town freeblacks died in the smallpox epidemic of 1713 which was brought to Cape Town by a sailor. After his move, Rangton appears at the back of the Stellenbosch district censuses until 1719, where he is listed with a sword and a gun, living alone. All Stellenbosch households were armed, only widows did not report weapons in these years. Rangton also appeared in the annual military parades and exercises of the Stellenbosch burghers. He paid his "lion and tiger" money. In short, Rangton was a "good burgher" of the *ancien regime* Cape, but that concept was nonsense if you were a freed slave. Whatever Rangton was, he was not a burgher.²⁶

Rangton died in a rented room, which belonged to Cornelis van Daalen, sometime in early March of 1720. Cornelis van Daalen owned the farm *Dwars-in-de-Weg*. The orphan masters drew up Rangton's inventory on the 13th March 1720. In this document, he is called "the freeblack [*den Vrijswart*] Rangton of Bali." No mention is made of his relationship with Elsevier in this document. J. Cruse's signature with the VOC stamp appears in the top right hand corner

The document reads:

In a sealed chest

1 new blanket

1 Cabaij [loose flowing tunic]

1 Moorish dress

1 [piece of] coastal [Coromandel] clothing

2 small jackets

1 napkin

8 packs of playing cards

6 matching [wood]planes

2 small chisels, 2 axes, 1 carpenter's plumb

3 tobacco boxes

Some jumble

1 canvas sack

In cash [*contant*] found in the estate *f.429:10*

[On the following page:]

1 carpenter's chest with some carpenter's equipment [at Stellenbosch]

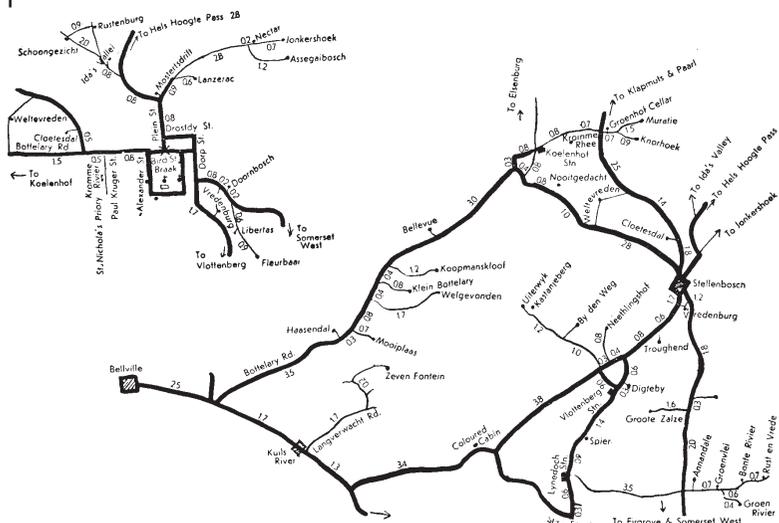
1 small chest of bedding [*kooijgoed*] at Cornelis Van Daalen

All inventoried at the Cape of Good Hope on the above date Committee
of Orphan Masters

Sr. Russeaux

Jer[onimus Hendrik] Snitquer²⁷

[Illegible signature]



Map 6. Stellenbosch - Map 7. Stellenbosch District

Rangton's Resurrection

After this inventory, interest in Rangton's goods quicken. From Rangton's distribution account we now know that the owner, or the owner's immediate family appropriated *all* of the deceased slave's goods or personal effects.²⁸ Against this, Gerrit Schutte asserts that the Company always claimed half of the estate in the case of the freed slave dying intestate. However, this was only rarely the case, viz. with baptized female *Company* slaves who married freeburghers, who predeceased their freed *Company* slave concubines. As can be seen from the following 1689 extract from just such a contract, the process of metamorphosis from slavery to freedom and incorporation into the settler family—so dramatic and strange to us—was carefully monitored just as any other humdrum accounting transaction:

...Andries Oelszen, free settler at Stellenbosch presently intending to marry Sara van de Caap, the Company's half-breed slave, declares that in the event of his bride's pre-deceasing him and in the event of her leaving no legal heirs, that a half of the estate, including land and movables, should be given over to the company, at the death-house [*sterfhuijsje*], before the debts of the estate are settled, to acknowledge and pay off the Company's rôle in bringing up and feeding the above-mentioned bride...²⁹

Since Rangton was not in any of these categories, we should not be surprised that Schutte's cited early *plakkaat* did not apply, and could never apply to Rangton's estate for the simple reason that Rangton was never a Company slave. Subsequent legislation, namely Van Dieman's *Plakkaat* (1642) overrode Schutte's cited earlier *plakkaat*.³⁰

A definitive answer can now be made by investigating Rangton's distribution account. Nothing at all was left to the Company, but everything devolved on Elsevier's relicts. By the time the account was drawn up in 1721, the entire amount of Rds 400 (less costs of the Orphan masters) was passed on to the minister Dominee Henricus Beck, since Elsevier's relict—Johanna Constantia—had already left. The guiding legal principle was that the slave was regarded as a minor child of the owner. If a child died, his or her goods would revert to the *pater familias* or his relations, even lateral, in-laws. What is shocking, is that this principle applied to slaves and moreover, extended into the freed phase of a slave's life. Being a freedman, was not the same as being born a free man. Freedom and adulthood, as least as property in persons went, did not mean much. Freeblacks were still the children of bondage. Property in persons was as thick as blood in Cape law and followed the same principles of domination, descent and ownership. Perhaps we should not take seriously the *ancien regime* euphemism "*vrijswart*." Precision would suggest manumitted slave.

Where there is a will there is a relative. In the case of intestate slaves the old Cape joke also works. Ten days after Rangton's death, dated from the preceding document, Johanna Constantia Elsevier—Rangton's heir—urgently asked her husband for permission to leave him and travel to Europe.³¹ He gave his permission in a written letter. Finally, she asked if she could take her slave Catherina van Macassar and some huge chests. She was leaving the Cape and would never return. We can only speculate as to her reasons for quitting the colony, but the timing cannot be coincidental. Her marriage had been childless and Beck had always been unpopular among the burghers because of his connections with the Elseviers. According to Adam Tas, he was quite boring and often made mistakes in his sermons. Perhaps she wished to return to her father in Holland.

Perhaps the arrival of some of her mother's irate relatives—the Sixes—somehow embarrassed her. The relative with the same name as her mother— Anna Maria Six—also named her daughter Johanna Constantia. Perhaps it was at the elder Johanna Constantia's insistence that led to yet another inventory being drawn up. At the request of no less than seven orphan Masters, another inventory of his goods was drawn up at the house of Cornelis van Daalen, on the 11th April 1720 where Rangton had died. Perhaps a claim had been made against the estate. The documents are substantially different. The total value of the estate must have been around 500 Cape Guilders, which includes 429:10 Cape guilders in cash. Perhaps his landlord claimed the most valuable items in lieu of rent. These were:



- 1 flintlock gun³²
- 1 bedstead
- 1 sealed chest
- 1 sealed carpenter's chest
- 1 torn blanket
- 1 mattress with 2 kapok cushions, some old clothes and linen without value
- 1 small pan
- 1 bird cage³³

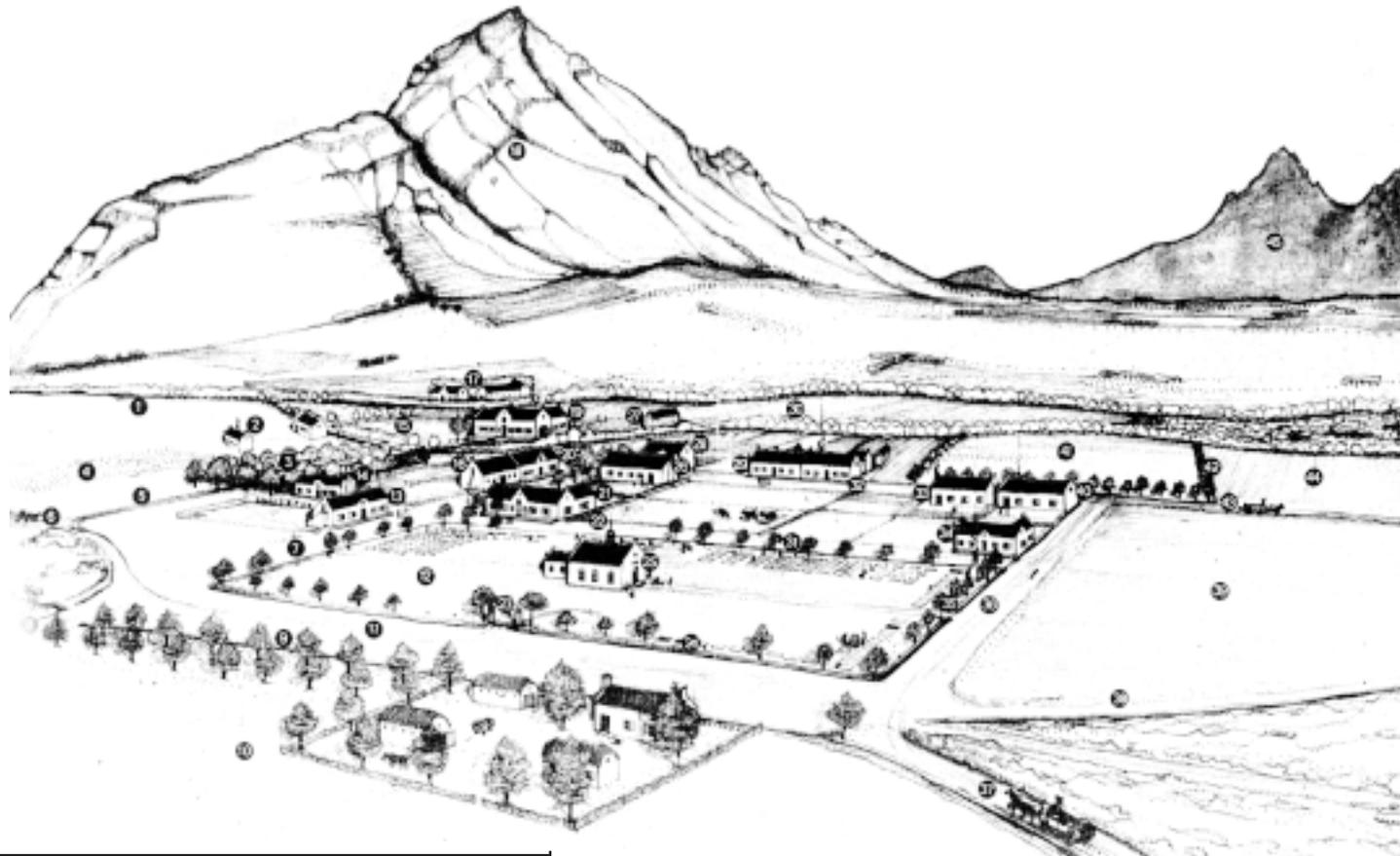
The sealed chest was opened to reveal his carpentry tools:

- 7 matching wood planes
- 1 small adze
- 1 small saw
- 2 braces [for a drill]³⁴
- 1 wooden triangle
- 1 wooden rule
- 1 oilstone [or sharpening stone]
- 1 small basket
- 1 steel vise
- 1 pair wooden measuring tools

Rangton's *vendu roll*

The following *vendu roll*—the list of goods actually sold for the estate and a record of to whom the goods were sold—was drawn up on the 4th of May. The valuable items, a bed and a gun, had disappeared. One orphan master, Jeronimus Snitquer, who was supervising the auction himself bought most of the goods! It is only at this point in the saga that the legend “Rangton of Bali, late slave of the Mr. Elsevier” appears in the documents.³⁵

1 Moorish dress	Zacharias Roet ³⁶	1.10
1 Coat from the Coast	Jan Spoor ³⁷	1.70
1 Cabaai ³⁸ with 1 cloth napkin	Bartholomeus Gulickx ³⁹	.35
2 small jackets	Snitquer ⁴⁰	.30
1 canvas sack with 1 tobacco pouch	Snitquer	.55
2 Tobacco cartons	Steven Niel ⁴¹	.35
2 small chisels; 2 files; 1 carpenter's plumb	Daniel Hugo	.6
6 assorted planes	Jacob Paasen ⁴²	.4
Some jumble	Snitquer	1.25
2 packs playing cards	Frans Jans: Lintilo	.35
2 packs playing cards	Snitquer	.4
2 packs of playing cards	Snitquer	.35
2 packs of playing cards	Snitquer	.35
1 empty chest	Snitquer	2.0
1 new blanket	Daniel Hugo ⁴³	2.5



*Stellenbosch in 1710,
adapted drawing from Leo Fouché, The Diary of Adam Tas, Cape
Town, 1970, plate facing page 16.*

The church (25) is in the square in the foreground.

*Ds Beck, the minister lived in the house above and to the left,
and Jan Elsevier, Constantia's sickly brother,
lived in the house to the right.*

The Helderberg must have been a keen reminder of Bali.

Rangton's lack of family life

The first item we can safely infer from Rangton's inventories is his solitude. Since most slaves imported to the Cape were male, there was a very small likelihood of normal family formation for someone like Rangton. Rangton lived alone in a single room, a stark, bachelor existence. There is nothing feminine in his inventory. In Stellenbosch, at the time that Rangton was living there, there were approximately three male slaves for every slave woman. There were also few unattached free black women in Stellenbosch, most free black women preferred Cape Town for their

residence. There were thus probably several free black bachelors such as Rangton in Stellenbosch. We have no idea of Rangton's sexual preferences. Homosexual activity in Balinese society was tolerated; not so at the Cape. We can therefore make few meaningful assumptions about his sexual relations.

Even if there was a possibility of family formation, there was no possibility of entering a legal (i.e. Christian) marriage until 1823. In my earlier article I had speculated that Rangton might have had a woman friend on the basis of his wardrobe, but I immediately segued that by also pointing out that no woman bought any item at his auction. Since Rangton had a small practical chance of meeting a woman and no possibility of securing a legal marriage, he was doomed to bachelorhood, or having 'bastard' offspring. He could have afforded a female slave, but he did not. Most imported male slaves in the early Cape could leave no "legal" issue. In such cases, property accruing to such bachelor slaves would always revert to their owners. The high sex composition of the imported Cape slave population is puzzling. It was often four times as high as the standard Atlantic cargoes bypassing the Cape. The Cape had the highest proportion of males in any recorded slave population. Is the probate reality of Cape slaves a possible explanation? Cape owners had everything to gain—in a selfish sense—by importing as many male slaves as possible, but at huge cost to the emotional and sexual stability of their slave work force. It would seem very uncharitable to claim this as the explanation of the high sex ratios, but it perhaps must be entertained.

Anders Sparrman, a Swedish botanist visiting the Cape in the 1770s, recorded the words of an overseer on a frontier farm with twelve single male slaves who in every way—lack of corporal punishment, good food—had treated his slaves most "kindly," but, as the overseer explained:

In order to avoid jealousy, quarrels and murder, my master does not permit any female slaves to be kept here, but I could wish it were otherwise, as well as in other places, where I was formerly a servant. Now they [the slaves] are lonesome and solitary, and consequently slow and sluggish enough.⁴⁴

Sparrman reflected in his journal on the effects of an unbalanced sex composition within the colony:⁴⁵

The main domestic item sacrificed with high sex ratios was social stability. The extreme violence, murder, rape, gambling, homosexuality and even bestiality that characterizes the behavior of some of the Cape slaves as depicted by Robert Ross in his fine survey of the Cape crime records, is mainly a result of the unbalanced sex compositions. Rangton, however, managed to survive this particular Cape ordeal with some dignity.

Rangton's working life

According to Leon Hattingh's pioneering work in the Stellenbosch civil cases, Rangton had financial problems. I now tend to think that he did not. Leon Hattingh based his judgement on one partial probate document which listed no cash. Hatting also claimed that Rangton could not

Cape *Plakkaats* and *Resolutions* forbidding slaves from gambling and playing cards, Rangton was no different from other Cape slaves. Perhaps his penchant for gambling originated in the Balinese culture. Conceivably, the bird cage—howlingly mistranslated in haste by me—but caught by the eagle eye of Gerrit Schutte, was the same wicker type which Clifford Geertz claimed the Balinese kept their fighting cocks. Perhaps cock-fighting had been part of Rangton's fate, too. We know that in the seventeenth century the Balinese kings staged elaborate cockfights in part to win slaves through gambling debts. Imported Balinese slaves in all likelihood introduced cock-fighting to the Cape. We know that cock-fighting later became a routine Sunday occupation for Cape slaves. Richard Renshaw, stationed at the Cape from 1796 to 1801, observed:

On Sunday, they [Cape slaves] are allowed a small degree [of freedom], which they make use of to indulge in their favorite amusements, particularly cock-fighting and dancing. They have a method of arming the feet of their cocks with a sort of knife, instead of a pin, which proves destructive to one of the feathered combatants, sometimes at the first fly. Many of the slaves, who have learned trades, and are allowed by indulgent masters to make use of them to their own advantage, often bet as high as fifty dollars upon a favorite cock, instances of which I have frequently seen.⁴⁸

Rangton was also something of a pipe smoker judging from the number of tobacco pouches and cartons. In all probability he would have smoked Virginian tobacco, since the Dutch imported this to the Cape and carefully controlled the monopoly. There is only a slim possibility of Brazilian tobacco being in Rangton's possession in the 1720s, since Brazilian tobacco at this time came only in snuff or in rolls, never leaf. There is also a possibility that Rangton was actually smoking Cape tobacco since Cors Hendrikz had been briefly allowed to experiment with the tricky crop at the Cape during Rangton's time. We need a study of the pharmacology of the Cape household. The date for the introduction of tobacco into Bali is a mystery but one may presume the infamous weed followed hard on the heels of the Europeans. Tobacco was part of the

find continuous employment. But this is true only as far as those recorded contracts are concerned, but does not exclude the possibility of occasional work such as he must have had on Hendrik Scheffer's farm or on Cornelis van Daalen's *Dwars-in-de Weg*. We know Rangton worked for them. Yet there are no contracts. Therefore we can say that he might well have had year-round employment. The absence of contracts cannot be used as evidence that he was unemployed.

It would not have been surprising if he could not find work. There was a long depression following the smallpox epidemic of 1713 which frightened away much shipping, the mainstay of the Cape economy. But there was much building activity going on in Stellenbosch after the fire of 1711 and therefore plenty of work for carpenters. Leon Hattingh also argues that Rangton probably struggled since he took Hendrik Scheffer to court for "a trifling sum." The point surely is that poor people rarely initiated litigation. The incident is worth telling since it reveals something of Rangton's character. One of his employers, Hendrik Scheffer, was remiss in paying Rangton's wages (11 guilders) and Rangton promptly took him to court.⁴⁶ The employer, however, was also his landlord, who sued him in return for six months unpaid rent (24 guilders), claiming "I do not want to short change the man, but he must pay me." Rangton pointed out that there was no lease, and complained that the rented room was "unlockable." Rangton liked both security and privacy. This resulted in further court appearances in 1714. The court found in Rangton's favor, a rare event for a freed slave (Leon Hattingh inadvertently terms Rangton a *burgher* at this point). From then until his death he is not visible in any documents, apart from the census, the tax lists and his contracts with the town and pastorie. These lucrative contracts were almost certainly due to his "family" connections with Samuel Elsevier's daughter and her husband. They would certainly be recompensed for their kindness in the final reckoning of Rangton's estate account.

We can safely assume both from the range of tools and from his work contracts that Rangton was a skilled carpenter. The small size of the tools (*kleijn dissel, klein zaagje*) and the number of planes suggest cabinet-making rather than carpentry. This is confirmed by the archival work of Leon Hattingh, who has unearthed all of his contracts with the Company and the church council of Stellenbosch. Hattingh claims that Rangton was the first free black to earn a living as an artisan and was much in demand. Here Rangton's patronage circle is important to remember. Dominee Henricus Beck would have seen what he could do for the ex-slave of his father-in-law. Perhaps Rangton's former mistress was the prime mover in Rangton securing employment in her husband's parish. In terms of employment, Rangton made the transition from dependent slave to independent artisan quite smoothly with only a little help from his "family."⁴⁷

Rangton's social life

Third, we can safely infer that Rangton was fond of playing cards. He had eight packs, more than any casual player would have. Perhaps he entertained. There are no chairs or tables in his inventory, so we can presume this was done on the floor plane. Judging by the frequency of

drug ration Cape *baases* gave their workers, both slave and free.

There were few cooking utensils listed except a small pan and a (washing-up?) basin. Smaller utensils were *not* too humble to be listed in other free black inventories. For instance, Francois van Mallebar had “2 knives” listed on his inventory. I see little wrong with Gerrit Schutte’s speculative visualization of Rangton and his friends sitting around a fire over which a dish of *bobotie* was cooking.

Rangton’s wardrobe

Rangton owned a “Moorish tunic” and another tunic which, judging from the price it fetched in the *vendu*, was a garment in reasonable condition. According to his inventory, Rangton did not own even a single pair of pants. The inventory of Francois van Mallebar, who was infinitely poorer, has a much wider range of clothing, viz. four pairs of pants, three shirts, one pair of socks⁴⁹ and combinations, e.g. “hembrok” “hembrokje” “hembroek” (7) and even a tie, two hats, a pair of silver buckles and a port-*epee*. Francois must have made a dashing appearance with hat and tie and sword swinging from his tunic. Rangton did not have a port-*epee* in his inventories and one could therefore probably conclude that he did not carry a sword when out and about.

We may conclude from the comparison of these two inventories that in this period freeblacks dressed according to their own particular tastes. That these two slaves from quite different origins had such different ideas about dress, allows us to say that this pattern is at least consistent with a hypothesis that they were dressing along lines of ethnic origin. There was certainly no standardization of dress, although the authorities later tried (quite unsuccessfully) to impose Calvinist dress codes on the Cape free black women.⁵⁰

Sleeping arrangements

Apart from Rangton’s tools, the most valuable items were his bedding: a mattress, two kapok pillows, a *new* blanket all suggest that Rangton invested some money in his sleeping arrangements and valued his nightly comfort. Another freeblack, from quite another culture, also valued his nightly comfort: Francois of Mallebar also had one mattress, 1 blanket, 2 cushions, and 1 bedstead, the same basic sleeping kit.

Summing up

Rangton emerges as somewhat unusual and definitely an atypical free black. First, he migrated to Stellenbosch, when most free blacks and exiles were moving from there to Cape Town or already lived in the port. There are two explanations for Rangton being the exception to the rule. First, his Balinese experience would have prompted him to go inland. Second, his former owner’s relicts (Rangton’s “family”) all lived in Stellenbosch.

Rangton was also unusual in that he was not browbeaten by the colonial system, or his

experience of slavery. For instance, he was confident enough of his place in Stellenbosch society to initiate litigation against a quite wealthy settler. While he never purchased a house, horse or a slave (any of which he could have afforded) he established himself as a solid artisan in a colony in which, according to the Governor de la Fontaine, who ruled a few years later, most artisans found it difficult to make their way. For instance, Willem Bergman, a contemporary carpenter of European descent, could not make his way and had to take in sailors as lodgers. He was in debt in 1731. Hendrik Scheffer, the Stellenbosch blacksmith who took Rangton to court, was, according to the same source, also in debt in 1731. In every respect, Rangton was a worldly success. That success must be weighed against a vicious colonial system which had stolen him from his very home and made him pay again for the restoration and registration of his freedom and then have his goods and money taken again when he died. Rangton's experience of slavery was short by Cape standards, few slaves were manumitted, but he died at the average age of slaves who had survived childbirth.

Rangton, however, was a classic member of the colonial class of people—slaves—who were unable through their situation to own land, have a family, leave heirs, or have rights over their own property. Even in death, Rangton, the free black, belonged to his ex-owner.

Historiographical considerations

Ever since Frank Tannenbaum wrote his pioneering comparative work *Slave and Citizen* in 1946, there has been a spirited, patriotic response on the part of a few Dutch-born scholars to defend the various systems of Dutch colonial slavery. There were two main reasons for this response. First, there was the historical irony that the freedom-loving Dutch failed to develop a convincing abolitionist movement until the 1860s. Second, what galled the same Dutch scholars was that Tannenbaum had clearly and unambiguously claimed that the Dutch systems of slavery were the “hardest” slave regimes which the world had endured. A tradition was begun in Holland, led by Hermanus Hoetink, among others, of demonstrating that there were considerable variations within the Dutch slaving experience which seriously compromised Tannenbaum's stark judgement on Dutch slave systems. Hoetink's argument was based on the “fluid race relations” in Curaçao, the Caribbean variant which allowed Hoetink to dismiss Tannenbaum. One notes, *en passant*, that Gerrit Schutte approvingly quotes Hermanus Hoetink. Hoetink did not inform his readers that the island's serenity was partly based on massive twentieth century industrial developments, among them, the foundation of the world's oldest oil refinery, established in 1914. Unheard of prosperity and full employment came to the island after slavery was abolished, an exception surely that proves the rule. This tradition has continued until today with attacks launched from Holland by Gert Oostindie on Richard and Sally Price's judgements on Dutch slavery in Surinam.

South Africa with its well-known contemporary system of organized brutality was in many respects the ideal test case for Tannenbaum's theories about the ramifications of what Tannenbaum termed “hard” slave societies. With the appointments of Heather Sutherland to the

Free University of Amsterdam, and Robert Ross at the University of Leiden, new comprehensive and radical enquiries into Dutch slavery in Indonesia and South Africa respectively, was begun from *within* Dutch Universities by scholars born outside Holland.

The documents on Rangton suggests that the term “free black” might be a misnomer since the inheritance laws still regarded ex-slaves as slaves, and moreover as minor children of their owners. These sinews of dependence, based on the legal machinery and institutionalization of slavery, were deeply damaging to the emerging society. Neither Cape owner nor Cape slave could ever escape from what Gyan Prakash, writing on nineteenth century India, has so appropriately called the “genealogies of bondage.” It is possible that manumitted slaves appear in similar documents, in which case we will learn even more of such fascinating persons as this gun-toting, comfort-loving, litigious, gambling cabinet-maker from Bali, who has again earned for himself some attention.

Early nation-building historians of South Africa conveniently overlooked that the occupation of the Cape was a reluctant afterthought within a highly successful global corporate slave-holding empire. The VOC did not schedule the Cape for colonization. Production within the lands of the eastern empire the Dutch acquired had been based on slavery and established slave trades for many centuries. That huge corporation loosely presided over ethnically diverse slave societies with established ethnic, religious, and gendered hierarchies. In these Eastern, Indian ocean and African possessions many of South Africa’s administrators, settlers and slaves first learned of, and lived with, “other” people who did not share their own heritage or political vision. These were people had their own institutions of slavery. Those societies had since ancient times seen debt bondage and evolved societies based on formal and institutionalized hierarchies. South Africa in 1652, therefore, far from being a blank page on which the Europeans scribbled, was really a palimpsest. Eastern, African *and* European social and cultural traditions of coerced labor and bondage collided and mixed in 1652. Early colonial South Africa therefore, was a reflection of the demographic make-up and life experiences of a diverse, shifting, colonial slave-owning population and their bonded pasts. Moreover, up to 1731, South Africa was a colony of a colony. Batavian law, the early Statutes of India (1619) and Van Dieman’s *Placcaat* (1642) had precedence in Cape law. Indonesian mores and ways of life and law, not only those of Holland, held sway in the early Cape.⁵¹

Only gradually did the Cape develop its own characteristics which were as often derived from Asia as they were derived from Europe. The Cape took a long time to evolve anything to rival the byzantine hierarchical complexities of the magisterial residency cities of the East, but even as early as 1720, it was clear that the world the slaves were busy creating, was already taking shape.

Cape historians are lucky. Historians of colonial America, for example, cannot employ such sources since persons imported to the Americas as slaves rarely had their individual origins recorded in any document which has survived in a systematic series. The possibilities of this excellent documentation are profound. If it is possible to reconstruct the material and cultural life of an individual slave such as Rangton, it will only be a matter of time before we can reconstruct and unravel the entire social and material universe of the Cape slave-holding society.

Why should one bother with such an exercise? Until recently, historians of South Africa have generally ignored slaves although they constituted the bulk of immigrants into South Africa until 1808. Consequently, the descendants of these compulsory deracinated immigrants have little history of their own. Historians have somehow forgotten that slaves both built and maintained the infrastructure of the colony—forts, farms and roads, and developed the creole cuisine—while their owners sat smoking on their *stoeps* or returned to Holland or England. Restoring the history of such people—forgotten, ignored or suppressed by the colonial process and historians, should be part of the modern Cape historian's agenda. In this view, history may become an obscure branch of democracy—restoring historical voices and their art to the present and providing a door to the slave past.

List of references for Rangton's chapter

¹ C. de Bosdari, *Cape Dutch Houses and Farms* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1971), pp. 45.

² Bosdari, *Cape Dutch Houses*, 69.

³ James Deetz, the historical archeologist has defined vernacular architecture in another way: "buildings built without architect's plans. James Deetz and Patricia E. Scott, "Buildings, Furnishings and Social Change in Early Victorian Grahamstown," *Social Dynamics* 16, 1 (1990): 80. However, since Groote Schuur contained vernacular artifacts, although designed by an architect, the definition would seem to be in need of revision.

⁴ Hans Franssen and Mary Alexander Cook, *The Old Buildings of the Cape* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1980), s.v "Elsenburg", page 166,

⁵ Cf. Robert C.-H. Shell, "Rangton van Bali: Roots and Resurrection," *Kronos*, 19: 167ff.

⁶ Clifford Geertz, *Negara: the Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 14-55.

⁷ J. Stephen Lansing, *The Three Worlds of Bali* (New York, 1983), 16-17,23,26,29,32,78,83,87.

⁸ Adrian Vickers, *Bali: A Paradise Created* (Victoria: Penguin Books, 1989), page 38 ff.

⁹ Rangton's careful arrangement of his tools, the sorted planes, the chest of carpenter's equipment all testify to someone who looked after his equipment and also knew how to store tools properly. Confer *infra*.

¹⁰ Nordholt, "Macht, Mensen en Middelen," pages 46-47.

¹¹ Leonard Guelke, Robert Shell, Anthony Whyte, comps., "The de la Fontaine Report" (New Haven: Opgaaf Project, 1990) passim. The phrase "veele bestaan van visschen" stands *pars pro toto* for the entire freed slave community.

¹² Vickers, *Bali*, page 12.

¹³ Willard A. Hanna, *Bali Profile: People, Events, Circumstances, 1001-1976* (New York: American Universities Field Staff, 1976), page 92.

¹⁴ Vickers, *Bali*, page 13.

¹⁵ Nordholt, "Macht, Mensen en Middelen," page 44.

¹⁶ According to Vickers, originally the Balinese term *amuck* (amok, a muck, a mucks) referred to the autochthonous form of warfare where leading warriors on each side would dress in white and go berserk at the head of their troops in a series of hand-to-hand skirmishes at the begin-

Slaves, even under the mildest tyrant, are bereaved of the rights of nature. The melancholy remembrance of so painful a loss is most apt to arise during the silence of the night...what wonder then, if those who commit outrages on their liberties, should sometimes be forced to sign and seal with their blood the violated rights of mankind? Ought not my host, gentle as he was, to fear the effects of despair on twelve stout fellows forcibly taken from their native country, their kindred, and their freedom? Is it not likewise to be dreaded, that thus shut out from the commerce of the fair sex, which sweetens life, and renders its cares supportable, their inclinations, which are extremely warm, should trespass against manhood.

ning of battle. This aristocratic show of strength and bravery was designed to intimidate the enemy. It also had an altruistic purpose in that it could end a battle without the need to engage the enemy's main body of troops. Vickers, *Bali*, page 17. This practice was introduced to the Cape where its original meaning was lost and came to mean to European observers a sort of irrational crazed and drug induced blood lust and more recently "mental illness" see Edna Bradlow, "Mental illness or a form of resistance? The case of Soera Brotto," paper presented at "Cape Slavery—and after" Conference, University of Cape Town, South Africa 10-11, August 1989.

¹⁷ "Nogmals Rangton" page 000; Vickers, *Bali*, pages 16-18.

¹⁸ Nordholt, "Macht, Mensen en Middelen," pages 48-49.

¹⁹ C. Pama, comp., and de Villiers, C.C., *Geslagregisters van die ou Kaapse Families* 2 volumes (Cape Town: Balkema, 1981), page 89.

²⁰ See Robert C.-H. Shell, "Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope: 1680-1731." New Haven: Yale University, Ph.D., 1986. 2 vols. indexed, page 100 footnote 40, 208.

²¹ Leo Fouché, ed., *Dagboek van Adam Tas*, page 348.

²² *DSAB*, 3:272.

²³ Since Rangton was a carpenter, I do not believe he was ever a household servant. Supporting this, the Elsevier household slaves were freed in 1711 gratis, while Rangton was obliged to pay Rds. 100.

²⁴ *Dictionary of South African Biography*, s.v. "Elsevier, Samuel," 3:272.

²⁵ After 1735 the censuses record that free blacks were segregated and no longer owned weapons. VOC 4118 (1 May 1732) free blacks segregated on a new page; VOC 4126 (1 May 1735) folios 21-26, no weapons listed.

²⁶ Leon Hattingh erroneously identifies Rangton as a burgher.

²⁷ Jeronimus Hendrik Snitquer arrived at the Cape in 1709. He was secretary of the Orphan Chamber from 1717. He never married and he died in 1721.

²⁸ By immediate I include "in-laws."

²⁹ DO: Transporten en Schepenkenis (31 December, 1689) 18/90, pages 292-3.

³⁰ Van der Chijs, *Plakkaatboeken*, (1642) 1: 575-6.

³¹ H.C.V. Leibbrandt, *Requesten* (no. 53. Exhibited 2nd April) 2: 413

³² This had been listed in the 1719 opgaaf; the sabre had disappeared between the May of 1719 and his death

³³ I *vogelkooij* (could also be *wagelkooi*?)

³⁴ 2 omslagegers op een ... [illegible]

³⁵ CA MOOC 10/2 no 14 (4th May 1720), no pagination in original.

³⁶ He was listed as a burgher. He sold property in Cape Town. Deed Office, no. 1665 of 1725.

³⁷ Jan Spoor van Amsterdam became a freeburgher in 1715. He died in 1725. He married twice at the Cape. *Resolutions* (5 August 1721) 6: 127.

³⁸ A loose flowing tunic, Malayu from Persian.

³⁹ Possibly a relative of Helena Gulix, who had married Willem van Damme.

⁴⁰ His estate is listed as selling a property in Table Valley in 1721, The Deeds Book, no. 1401.

⁴¹ According to de la Fontaine, "is een oud afgeleeft man." Entry 135.

⁴² Jacob paasen was a burgher who speculated with landed property. Deed Office No. 1311 of 1719.

⁴³ One of the Huguenots from Champagne, here about 55 years old. He died in 1725.

⁴⁴ Anders Sparrman, *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* (ed. Vernon S. Forbes. Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society Second Series, No. 7, 1977) 1: 102-103.

⁴⁵ Sparrman, *Travels*, 1: 102-103.

⁴⁶ Hendrik Scheffer van Frankfurt came to the Cape as a smith in 1705. He married Sussanah Greef in 14 May 1709, through whom he came into some property, the 59 morgen *Dekkersvlei* and was listed in Stellenbosch in 1711 as a smith and farmer: *Resolutions* (15 July, 1717) 5:180; Hoge, "Personalialia," 356.

⁴⁷ We know from Hudson that this sort of relationship of the manumitted slave to master continued until the nineteenth century: "A slave once made free seldom forgets the family to which he formerly belonged and is still considered as one of the members of that community, claims their advice and sometimes their assistance to enable him to carry on his little mercantile concerns and at New Years Day - the greatest feast of the Dutch - receives some trifling present from his master or mistress, a remembrance for his good conduct." R.Shell, ed., Hudson, "Slaves" *Kronos* 9 (1984) page 61.

⁴⁸ Richard Renshaw, *Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, the Indian Ocean, and up the Red Sea...* (Manchester: M. Wilson, 1821), page 15; The practice seems to have died out in the nineteenth century. John Mayson, *The Malays of Cape Town* (Manchester, J.Galt, 1861), page. 16.

⁴⁹ Nobody has socks without shoes. We must therefore assume that shoes were not always listed in Cape inventories.

⁵⁰ Robert C.-H. Shell, "De Meillon's People of Color: Some notes on their dress and occupations

with special reference to Cape Views and Costumes: Water-colours by H. C. de Meillon in the Brenthurst Collection.” (Johannesburg: Brenthurst Press, 1978) [accompanying pamphlet], pp. 8-9.

⁵¹ G.G. Visagie, *Regspleging en Reg aan die Kaap van 1652 tot 1806, met ‘n bespreking van die historiese agtergrond* (Cape Town: Juta, 1969).