

Introduction to the Inventories of the Orphan Chamber

TEPC Transcription Team, Cape Town



The TEPC Transcription Project

The acronym TEPC stands for Transcription of Estate Papers at the Cape of Good Hope. It is a joint project of the Universities of the Western Cape and Cape Town in partnership with the Cape Town Archives Repository and the National Archives at The Hague with the overall goal of equitable access to significant archival resources associated with the history of the Cape.

Ms Ellen Berends, Netherlands Consul General in Cape Town until mid-2005, initiated the project. A historian herself, she enthusiastically endorsed the proposal and ensured that a budget of over R1,5 million was forthcoming. The first phase of the project lasted 15 months, from 1 October 2004 to 31 December 2005.

Due to the success of the project, the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Pretoria has generously approved an application for a second phase, running from 1 February to the end of December 2006.

The goal is to make a complete transcription of certain papers from deceased estates administered by the Orphan Chamber at the Cape between about 1690 and 1840, and a catalogue of associated documents. A joint UWC and UCT research group identified the estate papers as the most appropriate series for transcription. This group also participates as advisors to the project and participated in various events, such as seminars and public workshops.

A team of editors and transcribers worked at the Cape Town Archives Repository and specialist computer consultants [[Sentrum](#)] customised the computer software, collected specialist resources, and transformed hand-written Dutch into a digital database.

The transcription team consists of three editors (Dr Helena Liebenberg, Ms Erika van As and Mrs Illona Meyer) and four transcribers (Ms Fiona Clayton, Mrs Maureen Rall, Mr Kobus Faasen and Mrs Annemarie Krzesinski).

The TEPC transcription team in the Reading Room, 2005



From left to right: Fiona Clayton, Kobus Faasen, Erika van As, Helena Liebenberg, Annemarie Krzesinski and Illona Meyer. Front: Maureen Rall

The project is in the joint name of UWC and UCT because members of both universities are involved in the planning of the project, and materials will be used by students from both universities. The project is headed by Prof Nigel Worden, Department of Historical Studies, UCT, supported by Dr Sue Newton-King, Department of History, UWC and is under the supervision of a project manager, Dr Antonia Malan, Historical Archaeology Research Group, UCT.

In 2005 a series of public workshops showed what these fascinating documents contain and explored how they can be used and developed by different groups. Participants contributed towards a guidebook for researchers, “Household Inventories at the Cape: A Guidebook for Beginner Researchers”.

The transcription process is closely associated with a collaborative transfer of skills and capacity-building project for interested parties in the public sphere.

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Introduction

Inventories of the Orphan Chamber at the Cape of Good Hope

The Orphan Chamber was set up in 1673 and functioned throughout the [VOC period](#) and into the [British period](#).

The inventories of the Orphan Chamber are invaluable sources for researchers interested in the life and times of people at the Cape from 1652 till 1834. The inventories list all the possessions in a deceased estate, including livestock and slaves.

At present the Archives of the Master of the Supreme Court (Cape of Good Hope) is housed in the Cape Town Archives Repository, Roeland Street, Cape Town. It includes:

Volumes	Description	Dates
MOOC 7/1/1-140	Wills and Appraisals	1688-1835
MOOC 8/1-48	Inventories	1673-1834
MOOC 8/49-74	Inventories and Appraisals	1780-1834
MOOC 8/75	Unbound Inventories	1673-1825
MOOC 8/76-77	Index to Inventories	1692-1834

There are household inventories filed elsewhere in the Archives, for instance in the 1/STB (Stellenbosch) series. The papers of the Council of Justice and the Master of Insolvent Estates also include inventories of people's possessions. Inventories spanning the 18th and 19th centuries are therefore to be found in other places.

Before you start browsing for information that could be of interest to you as a geneticist, genealogist, social historian, architectural historian, linguist, curator of a period museum, TV crew filming a historical documentary, tourism bureau planning a route to a historical site, heritage authority, economist, archaeologist, collector of artifacts or some other specialist, you may want to look at an [example of a MOOC inventory](#) and an explanation of the [structure of a MOOC inventory](#). If you want to have a look at [examples of some interesting inventories](#), you will be able to visit four households: two from the VOC period and two from the British period. Read more about the role played by [slaves in the inventories](#). The [language of the inventories](#) is also discussed. Should you come across unfamiliar words in the 17th and 18th century Dutch texts you can consult the **bilingual list** [in Dutch and English].

By transcribing and thus digitising the inventories their content can be made accessible and [available in digital format](#) and on the Internet. Read more about the [transcription and editing rules](#) that were followed during the transcription process.

If you wish to do further research on the Orphan Chamber at the Cape of Good Hope you may also consult the [source guide](#).

Context: History of the Orphan Chamber at the Cape of Good Hope

The Orphan Chamber as an institution had already existed in the Netherlands long before it was extended to Batavia in 1624 and the Cape of Good Hope in 1673.

A notebook used by the Orphan Chamber at the Cape refers to the Ordinance of the policies in Holland dated 1580 and the Ordinances of Succession by the states of Holland and West-Friesland dated 1594.

The Orphan Chamber functioned during the VOC period (1652-1795), the first British occupation (1795-1803), the Batavian government (1803-1806) and into the early years of the second British occupation from 1806.

Firstly, the [structure of the Orphan Chamber](#) during the whole period of its existence is discussed. Secondly, a description is given of the [functions and duties of the Orphan Chamber](#). Special reference is made about the enregisterment of slaves and Negro apprentices.

Searches in the Inventories

The [search function](#) is one of the main advantages of a digital publication. The first 40 volumes of the MOOC8 series of inventories contain between 2,5 and 3 million words! By means of *Free search* the researcher can look for *all the words, terms, names etc.* he or she needs.

It should be kept in mind that there were no regular spelling conventions to adhere to during the VOC period. Therefore letters such as C/c and K/k, F/f and V/v, S/s and Z/z, T/t and D/d, I/i and J/j, and EI/ei, Y/y and IJ/ij were used interchangeably, and it happened frequently that in one sentence the same word was spelt with a *uij* or *ui*, *ej* or *ij*, etc. In order to trace all the spelling variations of a particular word the researcher must identify its most essential element or 'stem' and then conduct a search. It may happen that even after a search for a number of letter combinations all the possibilities have not yet been covered. To a certain extent the same problem arises in the inventories written in English, because Dutch spelling and grammar rules were sometimes applied to the text, for example *three pair trousers* instead of *three pairs of trousers*.

In order to simplify the search, the *names of persons (deceased and/or spouse; unnamed persons)*, *names of ships* and *geographical references* were coded as separate groups. Since the spelling of the names was not normalised in the text, similar inconsistencies apply in these categories. For example, the name of a particular person, place name or ship could be spelt in different ways.

The *names of two groups of people* were regarded as important, namely (1) the *deceased*, or in the case of a mutual estate, the deceased together with his or her spouse, sometimes even a partner in a company, and (b) *slaves*: men, women and children. In principle slaves were not registered by the VOC according to their family/surname but were called by his or her first name followed by the place or country of origin, for example *Apollo van Mozambique*, *Rosa van de Caap* and *Badjoe van Bougies*, where the place name served as a surname. Where possible, these place names were standardized according to the spelling rules applicable to Afrikaans and Dutch. No other names of persons were coded, because of the very large number, diversity of references and spelling variations. Normalisation would have been too time-consuming and costly, but with the aid of the *Free search* option it is possible to conduct a successful search for personal names as well.

As far as *geographical references* are concerned, the researcher has to bear in mind that the most frequently used place names, such as *Cabo de Goede Hoop*, were not coded, since coding these geographical references would only have resulted in numerous unnecessary and unwanted repetitions. When referring to the VOC Chambers the place names Amsterdam, Middelburg, Hoorn, Enkhuizen, Delft and Rotterdam were not coded. Terms or words with an apparent geographical reference were not coded, for example *Mardyker* (free Christian); nor were language names, i.e. *Duijtsch* or adjectives referring to place names, for example *Chinase* in *Chinase porcelijn* (Chinese porcelain) coded. One may also search for the *year* (18 March 1750/17500318) and *inventory number* (MOOC8/1 to MOOC8/40). In this way all the MOOCs from one particular year or all the MOOCs collected in one archival volume may be found.

In the Introduction continual reference is made to the archival volumes from MOOC8/1 to MOOC8/40. These references can be traced in the [search module](#) under the search option *reference number*. The acronym MOOC refers to *Master of the Orphan Chamber*, the archives of the Master of the Orphan Chamber, with the TEPC Inventories being part thereof.

All the archival records of the VOC are described in inventories. The word 'inventory' is used to refer to lists or catalogues of records in the archives in general, but it may also refer to specific documents that list possessions, as is the case with the inventories listed under the Orphan Chamber. As far as the Cape Town Archival Repository is concerned, the MOOCs form part of the inventory series number 1/3.

The VOC inventories from South Africa as well as those from the Netherlands, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia and the United Kingdom [can be consulted on the Internet](#). There are even [more detailed descriptions](#) available on the Internet of many volumes containing VOC archival records, where a large amount of information regarding the Cape of Good Hope can also be found.

Inventories of the Orphan Chamber

Introduction to Cape inventories

An inventory (*inventaris*) is a list of possessions that is sometimes accompanied by an evaluation (*taxatie*). The latter term does not refer to the payment of tax, but to an estimate of the worth of an estate. Inventories list heirs to the estate, for example the surviving spouse, ‘children of all beds’, grandchildren, relatives – even very close friends, sometimes called *bloedvrinden*.

Cape inventories were a relatively complete and undisturbed reflection of households at the time of appraisal, which usually took place within days of death. There are some exceptions, such as the inventory of Hendricus Munckerus and his wife Elsje van Suurwaarden who were married in community of property. Munckerus died on 29 January 1705 and his inventory was drawn up nearly 2 1/2 years later on 20 May 1707 (see [MOOC8/2.8](#)).

In the country districts possessions were inventoried by two people, whether neighbours, relatives or friends, while in Cape Town by reputable commissioners. A clerk then copied the appraisal in a standard format, though the original details were retained.

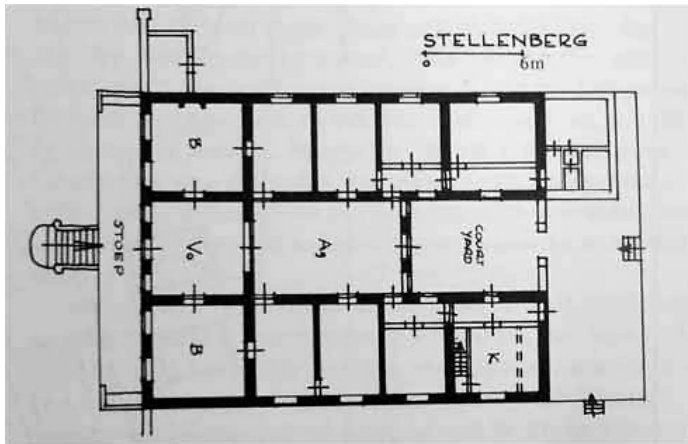
Short inventories were listed straightforwardly either ranging from most valuable to lesser items, or according to the appraisers’ access to the items (first household and then outbuildings or vice versa, as cupboards or chests were opened, etc.). At a certain level of listing, the possessions were categorised according to the space they occupied, for example rooms, cupboards, stores, attics, or outbuildings (i.e. sheds, slave quarters) and in the case of a farm in the yard and surrounding areas (*werf*). Livestock (*beestiaal*) and slaves (*slaven, slavinnen, leijfeijgenen*, etc.), precious metals and later in the 19th century, stocks and shares were listed under separate headings. Precious metal was valued by weight, whether jewellery, tableware or ornaments. Lists of larger households often included catalogues of book titles, and also, although rarely, pictures and collections of sheet music.

The cause of death was seldom mentioned in the inventories. However, in a few of the inventories of people who died during the second devastating smallpox epidemic that spread like wildfire through the Cape Colony in 1755 the cause of death, namely *kinder pokjes* or *kinder ziekte*, was mentioned. In the later inventories the time of death was also specified in most cases: “the late Major General Charles Collins Campbell. Born in Scotland died the 9:th day of May 1822 at 8 o clock a:m:” (MOOC8/37.47).

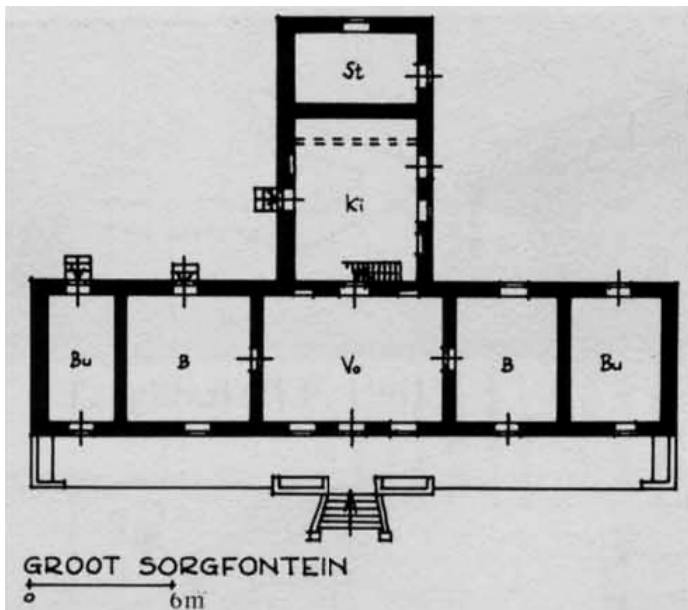
In cases of fixed properties, the name and location were provided. The fixed properties were often listed according to the main building and its various rooms, as well as outbuildings (outhouse, shed, etc.). Many of the deceased, however, did not own a house or farm, but lived with a friend or rented a room or house from someone more affluent.

The room-by-room appraisals are particularly valuable sources of information on households as a whole, because the layout or plan of the house and the number of rooms give an indication of its size, and the contents within it can be observed. The function of rooms is shown by their contents.

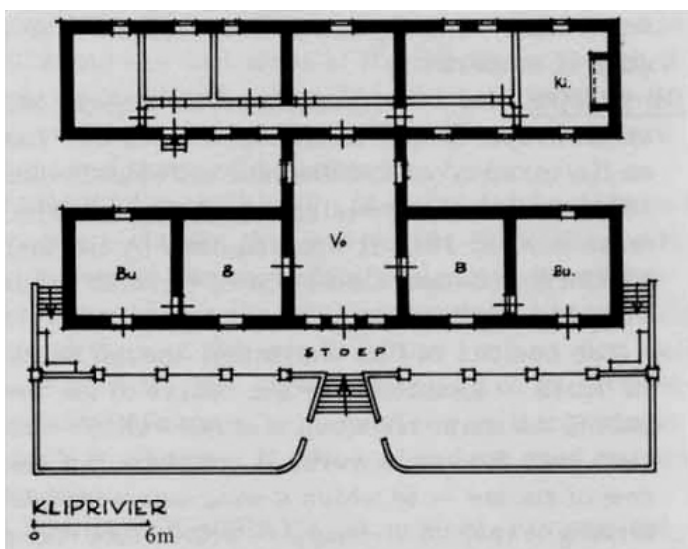
The following images are good examples of typical letter-shaped Cape houses of the mid-18th and early 19th centuries, showing the number of rooms and other interesting features.



1. Stellenberg, Cape Town suburb – mid-18th cent., U-shaped with 4-leaved screen between *voor-* and *agterkamer* (front and back room)



2. Groot-Sorgfontein, Groot-Brakrivier (George district) – c. 1814, T-shaped, *voorkamer* flanked on one side by 2 bedrooms and on the other by one bedroom and a *buitekamer* (outer room); end rooms have clay floors, other rooms have yellow-wood floors; most of original yellow-wood ceilings survive, also 2 plain wall-cupboards; early-straight end-gables, no front gable; exterior walls of great thickness: 2 1/2 ft.



3. Kliprivier, Swellendam – c. 1820, large H-shaped, 2 rooms beside *voor-* and *agterkamer* in each wing, 4 *holbol* end-gables.

(Source: Fransen and Cook, 1980)

Example of a MOOC inventory

The following example of a simple inventory in English contains numbers in brackets, which are explained in the following discussion regarding the structure of an inventory:

- (1)** MOOC8/39.15 **(1)**
- (2a)** 25 November 1823 **(2a)**
- (3a)** White, William **(3a)**
- (3b)** *William White* **(3b)**
- (4)** Inventory of things belonging to William White deceased and late in the service of Mr Damant of Cradocks Town, Uitenhage **(4)**
- (6)** three bullocks
three cows
four calves
one mare and foal
one silver watch
one pair of shoes
two pair new stockings
one hat
three pair trousers
three waistcoats
two jackets
one shirt
one handkerchief
two books
one razor and shaving box
one chest **(6)**
- (7)** hundred and eighteen rixdollars and seven schellings (including the balance due for wages, etc. **(7)**)
- (8)** Cradocks Town **(8)**
- (2a)** 25 November 1823 **(2a)**
- (9b)** John Damant, John Parker **(9b)**
- (10)** Rec:d rd:s42:4 from John Matthews at Graaf Reinet, Uitenhage
- (2b)** 22 April 1824 **(2b)**
- (9b)** C: Stadel **(9b)** **(10)**

Structure of a MOOC inventory

An inventory compiled by the Orphan Chamber had a specific and quite rigid structure. Often an inventory compiled by a burgher or field-cornet (*veldkornet*) in the districts did not follow the aforementioned structure to the letter, although it adhered to the elementary requirements.

In many cases the language used in these inventories reflects in some way or another deviations from 17th and 18th century Dutch. After the second British occupation of the Cape in 1806 the number of inventories in English increased but did not exceed those written in Dutch and/or Cape Dutch.

(1) Reference code

MOOC: Master of the Orphan Chamber

8: series 8

39: volume 39 of the series

15: case number 15 of this volume

Should there be no case number, it is indicated as MOOC8/39_ *No number*.

When unnumbered documents were included under a particular numbered case, the main document is indicated with *a*, followed by the rest of the documents being *b*, *c*, etc.

MOOC8/4.122 1/2 a, MOOC8/4.122 1/2 b, MOOC8/4.122 1/2 c, etc.

(2) Date of inventory

25 November 1823 – this was the date when the possessions of the deceased were listed.

In the case of the standardised version the following international rules were adhered to.

If documents *b*, *c*, etc. were undated, the date of the main document *a* was used instead.

(3) Name of the deceased and/or spouse, the latter in the case of a mutual estate

(3a) White, William – this is the standardised format in which to present the name of the deceased. (3b)

William White – this is the name of the deceased as it appears in the inventory.

In the case of a mutual estate the husband's name precedes that of the wife.

Should there be no name, it is indicated as *No name*.

(4) Introductory paragraph

The following standard introductory paragraph (adapted according to content) usually appears in an English inventory:

“Inventory of all such property as has been relinquished by the death *ab intestato* of Levina Johanna Smith on the twenty fifth day of the month of April in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty five for the benefit of her three natural children, named

1) Eduard Justus born 12 March 1809

2) Carel born 9 March 1813, the two lastmentioned not baptized

3) Pieter born 5 August 1815

The aforesaid property having been taken under the administration of the Board of Orphan Masters of this Colony in behalf of the aforesaid children, and been inventoried by me the undersigned and was found to consist in the following articles, viz: ... ”

(5) Often a list of heirs

William White had no beneficiary. In the quoted inventory (4) 3 children were named as heirs.

(6) List of possessions

Immovable goods (i.e. farms, estates, erven, houses) and/or

Movable goods (i.e. slaves, livestock, a boat, household items, jewellery)

(7) Assets (credit) and liabilities (debit)

In White's case cash and receipt of money due as credit.

(8) Standard closing paragraph in English (adapted according to content)

“Thus inventoried at the Cape of Good Hope in the house aforesaid on the third day of the month of May in the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty five according to a statement made by Johannes Wedego and Carel Christiaan Hendrik Slosser whom declared to have acted herein bonafide and that to the best of their knowledge they has not withheld or secreted any thing that belonged to the aforesaid estate, and the said appearers further declared that is, and will at all times be ready and willing to confirm this statement by solemn oath if required, promising at the sametime that if after the date of these presents any property this estate might be discovered shall faithfully communicate it to the Orphan Chamber in order to amplify this inventory with the property so discovered.”

(9) (9a) Standard sentence in English preceeding the signatures

“In witness whereof the Commissioners together with the appearer and the Secretary have subscribed to these presents.”

(9b) Signatories

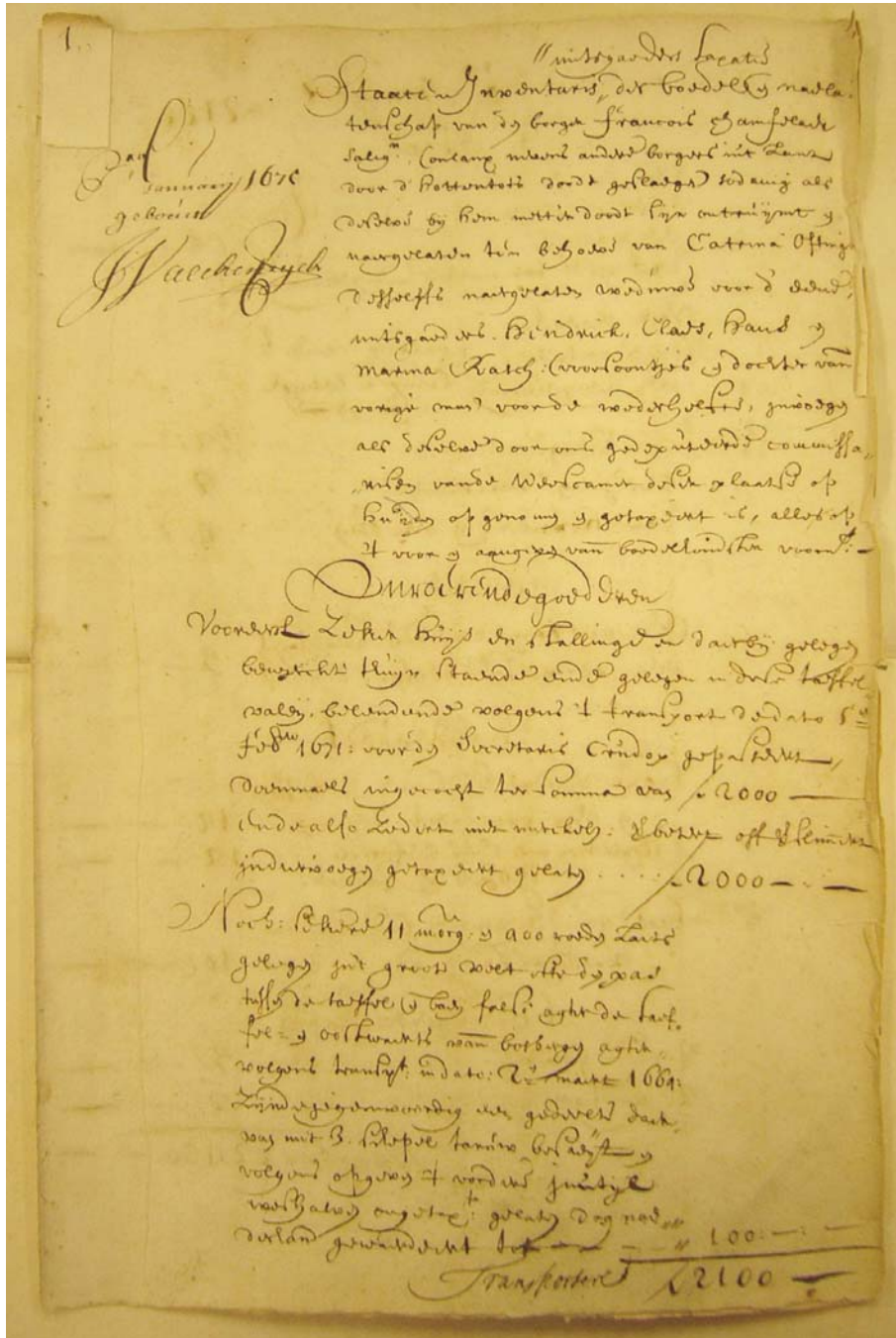
Person(s) who compiled the inventory, witnesses and official (if compiled officially) or authorized person(s) in the district (field-cornet and witnesses). The signatures on the left were transcribed first, followed by the signatures of those responsible for making the inventory, and the signature of the secretary or other official authorising the validity of the document.

(10) Additional information

Usually letters, notes, list of heirs, etc. regarding the case, often the first (‘unofficial’) inventory that was compiled.

Examples of some interesting inventories

According to the Treatise on the Orphan Chamber for His Majesty's Commissioners, the oldest document of the Orphan Chamber was an inventory, dated 15th June, 1673, in the estate of Dirk Verwey deceased and his spouse Tryntje Theunisz. It is probable that this inventory was lost before the book was bound, because the first inventory in this MOOC series is one dated 20th October 1673, of the estate of Francois Chamfelaer. He and other burghers had recently been murdered by "Hottentots" (see MOOC8/1.1 for the transcribed version):



Two inventories from the VOC period

MOOC8/19.12

This is the inventory of the deceased George Hendrik Godlieb Bergman. The date is 4 May 1786. The inventory is signed at the top by the second-in-command at the Cape, Pieter Hacker.

George H.G. Bergman was 30 years old when he died. He was born in Germany in 1756. Bergman was a medical doctor who joined the Dutch East India Company in 1781 and came to the Cape as a soldier. A week after Bergman's death his widow, Elizabeth Redecker, requested permission to sell the house in Table Valley. She desperately needed money. In this request it is also revealed that Bergman committed suicide. Besides his wife, he left behind a two-month-old baby. In another inventory, MOOC8/33.7, dated 14 June 1817, 31 years after his father's death, we meet the infant again, this time as George Christiaan Bergman, the sworn Notary living in Caledon.

Interesting and detailed information is gained from inventories. The researcher gets an idea of the marital and material status the deceased had in his or her life.

Inventories generally start with the name of the deceased, the inheritors and the situation of the house(s) and erf. In this case the house and erf of George Hendrik Godlieb Bergman is situated in Table Valley and specifically in a section marked Number 1 according to the title deed.

Other archival sources reveal that G.H.G. Bergman was a medical doctor who joined the Dutch East India Company and came to the Cape as a soldier. Evidence of these two professions is found in the inventory.

In the front room (hall) (*voorhuijs*) there are four muskets and a pair of pistols. In the room to the right (*in de camer ter rechterhand*) we find two copper pestles and mortars, two iron *balansjes* with their copper *schalen*, one apothecary's weight and other surgical instruments.

The presence of five paintings, a violin, books and a *docquetillie bord* with its discs (*schyven*), probably reflects Bergman's middle-class status. In total 33 paintings, some of Chinese origin, hang on the walls of the different rooms in this house.

In the room to the left (*in de camer ter linkerhand*) there are many references to clothing, i.e. uniforms, leather trousers, jackets, silk dresses, hats, socks, silver shoe buckles, copper knee buckles, shirts, waistcoats and two silver fob watches.

The inventory is interrupted when the widow states that her husband had on him at the time of his death a gold fob watch and a gold ring with a diamond. These, however, were not returned to her when his body was taken away; she received only the red ribbon to which the gold watch was tied – obviously someone had stolen the watch by cutting it from its ribbon.

The 'international' presence of the object d'arts, i.e. English sauce bowls, a Frisian clock and five little Chinese statues perhaps points to many travels or the huge presence of ware from other continents at the Cape.

In the kitchen the typical iron, copper, earthen, tin, pewter and wooden utensils of the day are present.

In the warehouse loft (*pakhuijs zolder*) there are stored some glass bottles and earthen pots with medicines, an old cuckoo clock, an old chair and objects that appear to have just been in storage and not used every day.

In the backyard is a vice, a butter tub, a door post and old woodwork.

At the closure of this inventory, just before the outstanding debt is mentioned, reference is made to the slaves Bergman owned. The two male slaves were Fortuijn from Soembawa and April from Nias. The auction list, dated 19 May 1786, reveals that Fortuijn was sold voetstoots ('as is') for 150 rixdollars to Joël Herhold and April was sold for 71 rixdollars to Johannes Prisilius (see MOOC10/15).

The debt and interest owed to the Orphan Chamber and a burgher named Johan Gustaaf Volmer, totalled 1679:32 rixdollars.

The inventory ends with the signatures of the officials, and the sworn clerk and writer (*gesw: Clercq en Schryver*) of the Orphan Chamber.

MOOC8/2.8

This is the inventory of the deceased Hendricus Munkerus. His wife's name, Elsje van Suurwaarden, also appears at the top of the inventory as they were married in community of property. The length of the inventory reflects the wealth and social status of Hendricus Munkerus. He was employed by the Dutch East India Company as an assistant merchant (*onderkoopman*) and *kassier*. The couple owned three properties: a house and erf in Table Valley, an estate situated in the Tijgerbergen and a small homestead. According to the title deed of 10 August 1705 the farm in the Tijgerbergen was called Rondebosje.

Generally inventories start with the fixed property of the deceased. This inventory is unusually drawn up because it starts with the material objects owned.

Goud en silver gemund en ongemund

First listed are the coined and uncoined gold and silver objects, i.e. buttons, forks, rings, silver mustard pots, a silver toothpick and snuff box. Interesting is the fact that silver and gold objects were priced according to how much they weighed, e.g. *one hoop ring* (plain ring) weighed 7 English lead at 8 rixdollars per lead, costing 6 1/2 rixdollars.

Koopmanschappen

Under this heading a number of kists of materials are listed. The names of these many and varied cloths reflect the richness and beauty of the merchandise, e.g. *Tutucorinse citsen*, *Chineesche groene armosijn* and *Tonquinse gevouwe witte pelangs*. Other goods listed in bulk are rolls of tobacco, sugar, soap, drinking glasses, table plates, etc.

Huijsraad en imboedel

The next heading lists the furniture made at the Cape, or possibly brought over from the Netherlands and the Far East. It is not clear from these lists in which of the three properties these items were housed.

Schilderijen

There is a separate list for the paintings owned by Munkerus. This list is exceptional in that each painting is described so that the researcher gets a good idea what he is 'looking' at, for example a picture depicting two Italian harbors and a portrait of the sister and brother of Mrs. Munkerus.

Boeken

The next entry lists all the books Munkerus owned. It is truly a vast library covering a broad field of interests. He had an atlas with 156 maps, a description of the city of Amsterdam, a Bible with a copper clasp, a maths book dated 1679, books on Roman Dutch law by Hugo de Groot. Also in Munkerus's

bookcase are a Latin dictionary and Latin grammar book and military and maritime books. One interesting book with the title “Samuelus Munckerus artis poetica periculum 1688” makes one wonder if it was perhaps a relative’s collection of poetry Munckerus brought to the Cape with him.

Combujs gereetschappen

The following category is a list of the kitchen utensils. These objects give one a good idea of what the inhabitants ate and how they entertained. Listed are beer, tea and fish kettles. In the kitchen is a chocolate jug, which indicates that besides wine and beer, chocolate was drunk. The utensils were made from iron, porcelain, yellow and red copper, tin, pewter and wood. Interesting are the objects from Japan and Bengal: six porcelain Japanese dishes, two Bengalese pitchers and eighteen Bengalese spittoons, of which four were large and 14 small. A noticeable item amongst the kitchen objects is an astrolabe.

Keeping in mind that no reference was made in the beginning of this inventory to the two fixed properties Munckerus owned, it is interesting that after the previous list clear mention is made that the following lists of farming implements and furniture were found in the estate at Tijgerberg (Rondebosje). Presumably the previous lengthy lists were inventoried at the house and erf situated in Table Valley.

Bouwgereetschap

The implements listed show what possible daily activities took place at the estate, i.e. wine making, wheat growing, the making of butter and bread, ploughing and woodwork.

Huismeubelen

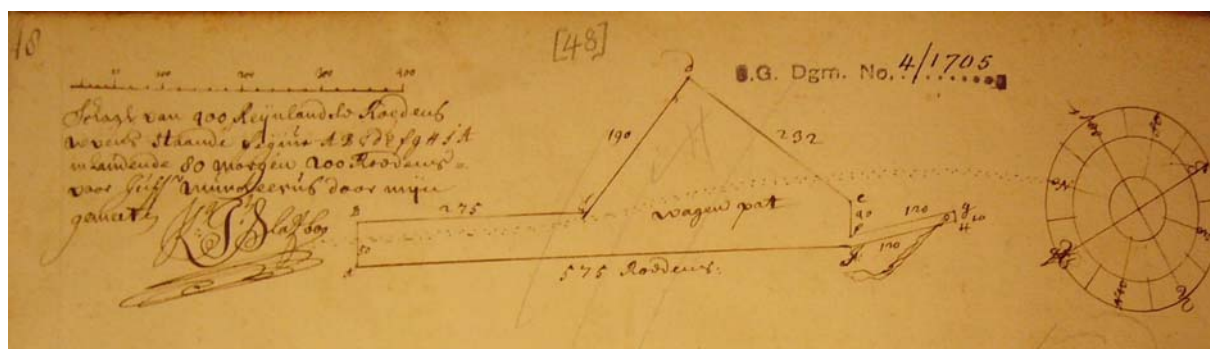
The furniture listed at the Tijgerberg house also comments on the well-to-do lifestyle of the Munckerus family. Once more portraits are listed, as well as a few Delft objects, namely three cheese moulds, plates and a colander.

Cred:t and Den boedel debet

At the end of the inventory the credits and debits of the deceased’s estate are listed. The slaves that Munckerus owned are listed under credits. He had in total 10 male slaves, 2 female slaves and 6 young slave children – all unnamed.

One of the debts listed is 333 1/3 rixdollars for funeral clothes and other related funeral expenses.

The inventory was signed at the Cape on the 20th May 1707. Present were the two Orphan Masters and Secretary of the Orphan Chamber. Elsje van Suurwaarden signed her own name as Elsie van Suurwaarden. During a meeting of the Orphan Chamber the widow was asked to state under oath that to her best knowledge she had not withheld any item that should also have been inventoried.



Sketch and plan of farmland granted to Elsje van Suurwaarden called Rondebosje in the Tijgerbergen, 10 August 1705 signed by Willem Adriaan van der Stel (CTD. Cape Title Deeds. vol. 11. C.A.R.)

Two inventories from the British period

MOOC8/40.14

Hendrik Canterbury died at 11 o' clock on the evening of 28 April 1825. His last will and testament had been made on 29 April 1822 in the presence of the Notary Public, Rynier Beck and witnesses. According to the inventory his sole and universal heirs were his three natural children conceived by the late female slave, Christina of Ceylon, namely Hendrik Cesar Canterbury, Jesimina Canterbury and Job Canterbury. The last two children were still in slavery at the time of the execution of his will. His other heirs were his four children conceived by the free woman Eva of the Cape, named Hester Elizabeth Canterbury married to Fredrik Jacob Schowkerk, Silvia Catharina Hendrica Canterbury married to David Davidsze, Maria Johanna Hendrica Canterbury born 12 September 1808 and Fredrik Willem Canterbury born 12 November 1814. However, according to Heese and Lombaard (1986), there was another child, Caroline Marthina, who was married to John Mckenzie at Caledon on 12 May 1839. Canterbury appears to have been a colourful character and was associated with an old saying: "Dis ou nuus van Kenteborrie" (Ibid: 544).

A slave boy named Damon, whom Hendrik Canterbury believed to be his child, was purchased by him from the late widow le Sueur, and therefore ransomed. He also wished to have his said son christened and instructed in the Christian religion (CO3897/70).

On 30 August 1800, in the presence of Joh:s Hen: Neethling, Notary Public at the Cape of Good Hope residing in Cape Town and in the presence of witnesses who personally appeared, Mrs Dorothea Elisabeth Scheller, widow of the late Hendrik le Sueur, declared that she had sold and transferred to the manumitted slave Canterbury of Bengal, her slave boy named Damon, a native of this Colony who was born on 31 June 1793. Damon was the son of Canterbury and Christina of Ceylon, also a slave belonging to Mrs Scheller. The conditions of this transfer of Damon were stated in her will: that in case the said Canterbury, then free, may depart this life before the boy having reached his twentieth year of age, he shall remain and live with the said appearer or one of her heirs, until he has reached that age, and shall be instructed in such a trade as he shall be inclined to. When Damon became manumitted could he have taken on the name of Hendrik Cesar Canterbury, seeing that Canterbury's first-born according to MOOC8/40.14 was the freed Hendrik Cesar Canterbury?

Condition N:o 313 in the Book of Conditions (SO11/1) applied: a copy of the codicil of the deceased widow of the late H. le Sueur, born D.E. Schilder (Scheller) attached to her last will and testament and lodged with the Orphan Chamber stated that the children born to Christina must never be sold. The widow le Sueur and Christina requested that Jasemina, a nurserymaid, be given to her daughter Hannetje. The other child, Job, by request was to be given to her son Pieter *de jonge* (junior) and to remain in slavery until Pieter reached the age of 26. Job inherited 2000 guilders from Mrs le Sueur because he had *een steyve arm*. Pieter Lodewyk le Sueur registered Job, son of Christina of this Colony in 1818. He was a houseboy at the time and was sold to C.S. Pillans on 21 July 1829.

After the death of his former wife Christina, Canterbury had relations with a female slave belonging to Mr E.F. Schraader, Eva of the Cape, with whom he procreated children. The eldest was Hester Elizabeth Canterbury, whom he also purchased on condition that she be manumitted. In order to manumit them he desired that they should be admitted membership of the Christian religion. As for Damon's manumission, he begged, as a poor man, not to have to pay the Church the usual penalty that owners of slaves born in their owners' houses had to pay and who have confessed the Christian religion. The owners were obliged to allow these slaves to be freed on their paying the sum at which they should be valued. To such slaves was remitted the penalty established against the manumission of slaves, which then was only twenty five rixdollars, but later became fixed at fifty rixdollars each. The sale of the children to their father would

have the same effect as if they had bought their freedom themselves, or have been valued at the prices the father purchased them for (CO3897/47).

Hester Canterbury was born in slavery and bought by her father, Hendrik Canterbury, on condition that she be discharged from slavery. In his request to Lord Charles Henry Somerset, Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Canterbury stated his willingness to comply with all the regulations prescribed by the Colonial laws. The request was signed in Cape Town on 8 December 1819 (CO3916/386).

The other children born to Eva and Canterbury, Selvia (about 18 1/2 years old when manumission was requested) and Maria, both natives of this Colony, had been instructed in the Christian faith and baptized in the Reformed Church of the Colony, and manumitted in 1824 (CO3927/411). The aim of the propagation of Christianity and the general spreading of religious instruction amongst slaves was to promote morality amongst them and to improve their condition and conduct (Index to Slave Office 1/21).

The Assistant Inspector for the Enregistration of slaves in the Colony was Honoratius Fredrik Willem Maynier, appointed by the Government. Hendrik Canterbury appeared before him. After having obtained His Excellency the Governor's permission, Hendrik declared on 6 April 1821 to have Fredrik manumitted and discharged from slavery. The appearer's slave named Fredrik born in this Colony, was about seven years old. Fredrik Jacob Schowkerk, husband of Hester Elizabeth Canterbury, and Johan Christiaan Weis junior also appeared. They declared to bind themselves *in solidum* as securities, that the aforesaid emancipated slave named Fredrik would not within the fixed time of twenty years, become burdensome to the Church, nor through poverty be entitled to apply for any alimentation or support (Slave Office 12/3, Deeds of manumission 1816-1822 Folio N:o 261).

A codicil dated 15 July 1824 requested the Board of Orphan Masters of this Colony to act as the executors. Consequently the property was inventoried by the undersigned special Commissioners and the following found: a house and plot situated at 5 Leeuwe Street (see Plan of Cape Town, 1827). According to another record, his business as a hairdresser was at 22 Leeuwe Street (African Court Calender and Directory for 1822). In his house at 5 Leeuwe Street, the following were found: one table, one kitchen table, three chests, two trunks, two benches, one iron pot, two water buckets, two dishes, four plates, four spoons, four forks and two knives, two candlesticks, etc. The heirs requested that some of the deceased's clothes be given to the younger brother, Fredrik Willem Canterbury, as well as one pair of scissors, one comb, one hairbrush and one powder bag.

Eva Satzman, formerly Eva of the Cape and a housemaid, was the free slave whose owner was Ernst Fredrik Schrader. She was manumitted on 30 November 1826. The property which she claimed to be hers (confirmed by E.F. Schrader) ranged from a clothes cupboard to chairs, tables, curtains, blankets, pillows, a desk, ten paintings, buckets, a vinegar cask, candlesticks, a tea-caddy, Chinese pots, one soup spoon, plates, dishes, chests, cups and saucers, a silver pocket-watch, a lantern and a coffee mill. She claimed the remaining furniture and other articles found in the house of the deceased as her property. Eva Satzman was also listed as a *bijzit* (concubine) of Carel Human at Morgenroodt, on 28 July 1836 (Opgaaflyst voor het jaar 1836, voor den veldkornet Jac:s van Reede van Oudtshoorn).

Hendrik Canterbury junior, the hairdresser, was a colourful personality who lived in Hout Street for many years. According to H.J.W. Picard he must have been a great storyteller and complemented the rather dull local news columns of the first Cape weeklies with a wealth of intimate gossip. He was honoured as a popular figure in Cape Town by naming a street after him. He was missed when he moved from 26 to 53 Keerom Street in 1828 (Picard, 1968: 111).

Claims in favour of the estate amounted to several rixdollars for hairdressing services rendered, in arrears for as long as two years for some clients, for example Boniface and Martinus Holtman, at 5 rixdollars per annum. Claims against the estate included a mortgage to F.W. Flamme for the deceased's house. Another claim against the estate was a mortgage to the Lombard Bank on the house. "In 1793 this bank, the first government Bank in South Africa, was established to increase the revenue and relieve the distress then

prevailing and the want of currency. Paper money was issued and this was loaned to the inhabitants at 5 per cent on security on houses, land, gold, silver, jewels, merchandise, etc.” (The Public Archives of South Africa, 1928:11). Other claims were money owing to Hendrik Teubes, the meat supplier, and to J.R. Thompson for coffee.

The household had been inventoried on 2 May 1825 according to a statement made by the free woman, Eva Satzman, in the presence of the respective heirs of the deceased. She declared that she had not withheld or secreted anything that belonged to the estate and was willing to confirm her statement by solemn oath; and if at a later date any other property belonging to the estate might be found, she would inform the Orphan Chamber.

MOOC8/40.23

Simon Johannes Visser and Christina Maria Kriel, had four children according to the inventories in MOOC8/40.23 and MOOC8/68.4a:

- 1) Johan Hendrik Visser full aged
- 2) David Christiaan Visser full aged
- 3) Simon Johannes Visser born on 20 May 1803
- 4) Pieter Coenraad Visser born on 30 July 1811

Simon Johannes Visser passed away in 1822 (MOOC8/68.4a and b). Christina Maria Kriel left the estate to her 5 children when she died in 1825 (MOOC8/40.23).

In the general account of liquidation of the estate another child, Johan Abraham Visser, born 19 June 1808 is included with the other children mentioned above, qualifying him for his maternal inheritance (MOOC13/1/51).

No division of rooms is given for the house and plot in Riebeek Street in Simon Johannes’s inventory (MOOC8/68.4a and b). The house and plot situated in Table Valley at 15 Riebeek Street refers to a passage, a front room and a kitchen in (MOOC8/40.23). The passage had a sofa as well as pots, dishes, plates, glasses, spoons, five, forks, one knife, etc. There were bedding and eating utensils in the front room. Apart from the bedstead with its curtains and bedding there were plates, forks, knives and spoons which give an indication of the utilisation of the front room. Interesting items in the front room were two small looking glasses, one pocket knife, one Bible, one prayer book, a quantity of doepa, a quantity of nutmeg, etc. Although the Bible is an indication of the Christian religion, the doepa reflects a belief in the magic effects of a potion made of plants/herbs. The separate kitchen had the kitchen table, with its typical cooking utensils, namely kettles, pots, a frying pan, a gridiron, etc. This kitchen was probably used for cooking. There were a table, pots, empty casks one old chest, ladder and beam in the yard. It is clear that the passage, front room and the yard had been utilised for eating purposes. Contents of the house mentioned in MOOC8/68.4a include bedroom and kitchen furniture as well as the kitchen utensils.

The slaves belonging to the household were Fransina of Mallabaar, a house maid aged 68 years who, according to the children, should be manumitted at her own expense and Constantia of this Colony aged 58 at the time of death of Christina Maria who was her daughter-in-law. Simon Johannes Visser was the son and owner of Constantia, a wash and housemaid registered 27 March 1817 at the Slave Office (SO 5/5). Constantia was named as Constantia of Africa by her daughter-in-law (MOOC8/68.4b). The slave boy, Present of Bougies was a fisherman, 48 years of age.

There was some cash found in the estate, including Spanish and English currency. Claims in favour of the estate were monies owing from rent for a room from Albert, in service of Mr P.J.Truter and from Johannes in service of Mr Twycross. Mr Twycross was a shipping agent, as well as chairman of the Committee of the Commercial exchange. Could Maria Kriel also have benefited from this connection

with Mr Twycross, hence the type of currency and the possible income from fishing? Money was still outstanding for board and lodging from Jan Fisscher and lodging from Jacobus Franke. It is clear that Maria Kriel had an income from her lodgers. The big question is, where were they all staying? There were definite indications of sleeping arrangements in the front room, although there was only one bed. A sofa in the passage could have been used for sleeping too. Was the yard also used for lodging purposes?

Nearly all the city dwellers of Table Valley provided boarding as a second economic activity. The landlords were allowed to provide accommodation and meals, but not liquor (De Wet, 1981:53). One notices that there were many bottles, despite the meagre possessions: Johan Hendrik Visser, the son, had one case with twelve bottles in his possession. There were also fifteen empty bottles and eleven wine glasses in the passage. There was no limit to the number of boarding houses at the Cape, only a geographic restriction, namely that houses in Table Valley could be utilised for this purpose, because of the sea traffic (De Wet, 1981:55).

Had Christina Maria also been an active seamstress, because Regina a Khoi woman from Olieboom, owed her money for two chintz covers? Jacob Brown at Moddergat owed her cash. Moddergat in Hout Bay Rd., now Valley Grange, was a quitrent grant to Christopher Bird, Colonial Secretary in 1821 of nearly 400 morgen (Fransen and Cook: 1980:132).

According to the vendu roll of the goods of Christina Maria Kriel and Simon Johannes Visser by the Board of Orphan Masters at the Cape of Good Hope put up for public sale on 30 May 1825 at the house of the deceased Christina Maria Kriel, widow of Simon Johannes Visser, a slave boy named Present of Bougies, 48 years old and a fisherman, was bought by the son, Johan Hendrik Visser, for 310 gilders (MOOC10/39.28). The slaves as well as free blacks came from parts of the world where fish was an important and cheap source of food. The boats were sent out to sea early in the mornings with slaves as fishermen. The free fishermen of Table Valley made an existence from fishing, selling their dry and salt fish to passing ships (De Wet, 1981:57). Fishing was not an economically viable activity, because of the risks and the expensive equipment, therefore many fishermen became despondent and after a year or two would leave the Cape or work for the Company (De Wet, 1981:58).

It is then justified to say that Christina Maria Kriel had diligently striven to make ends meet through practising a few economic activities. Unfortunately the inventory is not a reflection of a wealthy estate. The estate of Simon Johannes Visser and Christina Maria Kriel was liquidated on 7 May 1825 (MOOC13/1/51). When Simon Johannes Visser died there were still some rixdollars left in the estate, namely Rd:s1085:46 (MOOC8/68.4a). However, at his wife's death the claims against the estate were Rd:s1333:16 to the Orphan Chamber owing to a mortgage bond and Rd:s325:38 3/4 for the paternal inheritance of the three minor children (MOOC8/40.23).

Slaves in the Inventories

The following tendencies in the household inventories give one an idea of the aspects of the lives of the slaves which were of importance to their owners.

Their place in the inventory

The heading “Lijfeigenen” appears in many cases towards the end of an inventory. Where the owner(s) owned a significant number of slaves, the male slaves would be mentioned first and then the women with their children, if they formed part of the household. In MOOC8/6.119 reference is made to the slaves as part of the belongings. In single cases a word such as “halvslag” would make its appearance. One slave named Martha with her two children, who were half-castes, belonged to Albert Diemer (MOOC 8/1.2, 1685). Reference would sometimes be made to the sizes and ages of the slaves. The fact that they had absconded was sometimes mentioned. Examples of detail to the ages can be found in 1825 in the case of Alexander of the Cape aged 38 3/4 and Januarius of Malabar aged 54 2/3 years (MOOC8/42.25). Sometimes reference would be made to “seven stuks jongen, drie stuks meiden en twee kinderen”, without having names given to them (MOOC8/1.2, 1685).

Naming

Biblical names were often given to the slaves, e.g. Salomon, Izaak, Abraham, Jonas, or sometimes the names of the month of the year, e.g. November, September, Julij, etc. In some cases the name would give an indication of the personality of the slave, e.g. Harlekyn, Platvoet, Snaphaan and Tooijang. Pasop of Malabar was a slave belonging to Arnoldus Johannes Basson (MOOC8/6.88, 1742) – one wonders why he bore this cautionary appellation meaning “be careful”. Their country of origin formed part of their name. Many slaves came from the Indian Ocean, India, Malaysia, Ceylon, the East African coast and the island of Madagascar. There were also slaves from Angola, Bali, China and Japan. Many were born “in this Colony” in other words the Cape of Good Hope, and therefore known as “of the Cape”.

Living area

There is not much focus on the slaves’ living quarters in the inventories. Picks, spades, bags of salt and shovels were all kept in the slave quarters (MOOC8/12.14). The third upper room’s contents of the household of the retired Henricus Beck are described as ironwork racks, a chest, junk and 1 slave, Coridon of Maccaser (MOOC8/8.12a).

Value and condition

Slaves were described and valued in terms of their condition, as old, blind, worn with age, or crippled. The slave of Caspar Hendrik Batenhorst, Cupido of Batavia, was in chains at the Battery at the time of the inventory and so was not valued (MOOC8/6.55, 1742). Rosetta of Madagascar was blind, therefore no monetary value was assigned to her (MOOC8/17.8a, 1778). On the farm Eselsfontein in the Bokkevelt, a slave named Flora belonging to Henderina Horsel was described as “stom en harsenloos” (dumb and retarded). Together with her child, Samson of the Cape, they were only worth Rd:s20 (20 rixdollars) (MOOC8/6.72, 1744). January of Bengalen and a young slave, Titus, also of Bengalen, were cripples. Their worth was Rd:s20 and Rd:s15 respectively. Both these slaves belonged to Baltus Roelofsz (MOOC8/6.73, 1744). Johan Fredrik Hässner and his wife Martha Maria du Toit found the slave Job of Madagascar inferior because of his age, which is not specified in the inventory. However, Job became part of the liabilities of the will. Johannes le Riche inherited this slave and a valuation was placed on him of Rd:s500 (MOOC8/37.31, 1820). A slave belonging to Leendert Louw named Trompetter was old and had leprosy (“lazarus ziekte”), therefore he had no worth or value (MOOC8/6.58, 1743).

There are a number of references in the inventories to deaths caused by smallpox. Jan Heijns and his only slave both died of smallpox in 1767, during one of the smallpox outbreaks (MOOC8/12.24). Slaves were subject to many illnesses, due to their living conditions. Januarij of Mosambique was seen as sickly and therefore valued at Rd:s100 (MOOC8/51.49, 1796). Cases of chest problems were mentioned, such as Sophie, who had a chest condition: “een long tering”(MOOC16.5, 1827). A slave called Ceaser of Madagascar had epilepsy and was worth Rd:s150. At the death of Reijnier Lafebre, Catharina Abigael inherited Pieter of the Cape, a breastfeeding young slave (MOOC8/9.6, 1755). A year later it is noted that a young slave named Pieter, who belonged to Catharina Abigael Lafebre, had died of smallpox (MOOC8/9.7, 1756). Silvia of Boegies had cancer of the mouth. She had two children, Diena 2 years and Philida, 8 years old. The neighbours referred to the lesion as an “aksident” (MOOC8/51.43, 1795).

Possessions

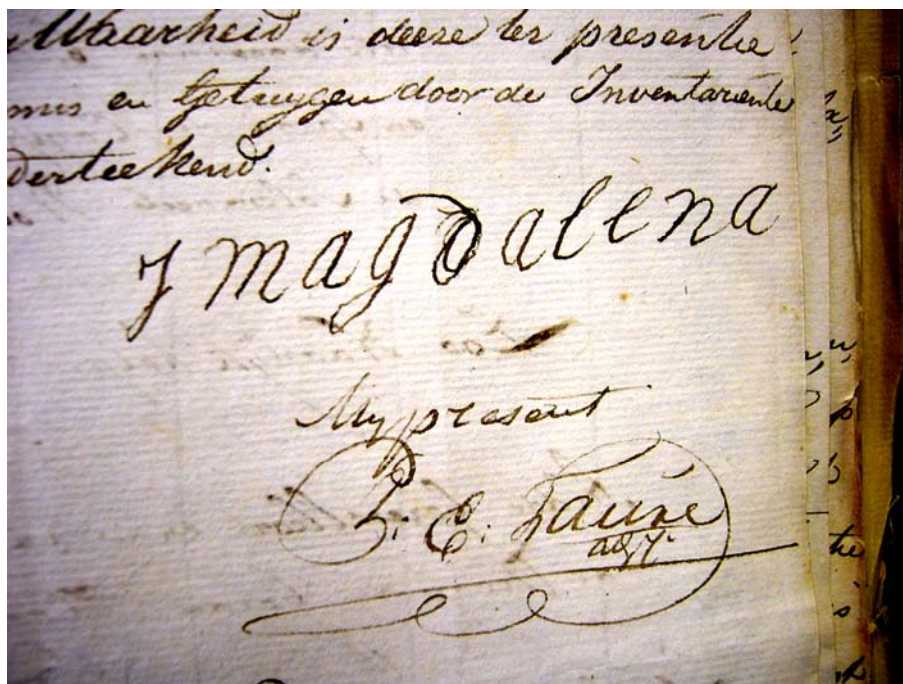
Some slaves owned possessions and money. Part of the retired minister Henricus Beck’s “lasten” was the fact that he owed the freed slave Henrica of the Cape, according to the legacy specified in the deceased’s will, Rd:s166.32. To the heirs of the freed slave Alida of the Cape he owed Rd:s200. According to the will, this money was given to her by her late father and given into the custody of the late Mr Henricus Beck for her heirs. To his unnamed slave Beck left all his woollen and linen clothes. To his living free slave, Henderica of the Cape, he left one sideboard, one kitchen cupboard, broken chairs, a pot, bed, table, a mattress and one bedspread (MOOC8/8.12a, 1755). Examples of possessions belonging to slaves are to be found in the inventories of the slaves, Alima of Mosambique (MOOC8/42.22, 1825) and Chrisjan (MOOC8/42.20, 1827).

Freed slaves

There are instances of freed slaves who owned slaves. Carel Jansz van Bengalen requested in his will that his slave, Rebecca of Bengalen and her two children, Jan and Appollonia of the Cape, be freed at his death. It was also stated in the inventory that Rebecca and her children inherited the young slave, Anthony of Coutchin (MOOC8/6.74, 1744).

Listing

Slaves were in some cases involved with the listing of the household goods. Johanna Magdalena of the Cape gave in good faith an account of the possessions of Cornelis Petrus Jansse de Bruijn on 25 April 1812 and promised to declare any goods that may come to her notice afterwards. This was done on 2 May 1812 and signed by herself as J. Mageen (MOOC8/29.17).



Another case was Betje of the Cape who declared to have acted therein bonafide and had not withheld anything that belonged to the estate of Johan Casper. She then signed, after the Commissioners J. Brand and C. Blanckenberg, her name as Elizabet van Kap in the presence of J.J.L. Smuts (MOOC8/44.51, 1830).

Labourers

Slaves were brought to the Cape to form the basic labour force. Christiaan Daniel Perzoon had doorframes, windowpanes, different lengths of wood, a chest with carpenter's tools, etc. in his carpenter's shop (MOOC8/17.22, 1776). Amongst his slaves were four masons, two stone hewers and a carpenter. Occupations ranged from shoemakers (Manuel of the Cape), vegetable sellers (Joseph of Boegies) and tailors (August of Bengalen) to silversmiths (Jan of the Cape). In the inventory of Gysbertus van Reenen and Maria Joh: Smallbergen many cattle and some sheepskins and bullock hides are inventoried. It is not surprising that one of their slaves, Philip of Malabar, 51 years old, was a tanner and another, Novel of Mosambicque, 41 years old, was a baker. It is also significant to note that another slave of this household, Carolus of Mosambicque, was 91 years old (MOOC8/42.26, 1827).

Instructions of the Will

Specific instructions were sometimes given in the will as to what should happen to the slaves after the death of the testators. Jan Dirksz: de Beer and Anna van Veldhuijsen specified that the 6 slaves at their house at the Cape not be sold but be divided amongst their children (MOOC8/1.63, 1701). In another case children would request to own certain slaves. In the will of Debora de Koning her eldest son and daughter had made their choice of slaves (MOOC8/7.53, 1748). There are many requests for slaves to be manumitted at the death of their owners. A case in point is Leonora of the Cape: Hendrik Heijns had to promise his father on his deathbed that she would be freed after his death (MOOC8/20.43, 1793).

Children

Many children were born into slavery. There was a dispute sometimes concerning this issue, as in the case between the deceased Izaak van de Kaap and Carel Christiaan Mocke (MOOC8/35.15, 1820). Mocke

appealed to the King and Courts of England, because the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the deceased. The slaves, Rosina of Mosambicque with her children, Anthony, Salomon and Roosje were still Mocke's possessions and the honourable De Wet was aware that Rosina, who since being with Mocke had born another child, but whose name he, De Wet, did not know. The child in question had to be Doortje, the youngest, 6 years old at the time.

Clothing

In some cases the clothing of the slaves was mentioned as part of the inventory. Debora de Koning had 2 packs of sheeting used for slave clothes in her attic. She also had slave gingham in her upper room (MOOC8/7.71, 1748). Michiel Groos owned 9 blue slave shirts (MOOC8/7.53, 1750). In Theunis Dirksz: van Schalkwijk's wine cellar he had 6 pairs of slave trousers that had to be divided amongst 14 slaves (MOOC8/3.42, 1717). Adam Leendertsz van Nieuwenbroek owned 4 slave dresses apart from 5 pairs of slave trousers (MOOC8/3.81, 1718).

The abovementioned information portrays the position and role of the slaves in the selected household inventories at the Cape between 1717 and 1830.

Bilingual list

In some instances it is quite difficult if not impossible to trace unfamiliar words and their meaning in present-day Dutch sources. For those non-speakers of Dutch who are interested in the contents of the inventories, it is an almost impossible task to know the English name of each Dutch-written item, not to mention the meaning concerned.

In order to limit the problem a bilingual list containing unknown or hard-to-find words was compiled and is presented at this site. It consists of a list of both the words and their meaning in Dutch, followed by the translations and their meaning in English.

A number of bilingual dictionaries, mainly old versions, as well as the “Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal” (Dictionary of the Dutch Language) were consulted. For the digital presentation the preliminary terminology list [**Bilingual list**] was compiled to be used as a reading aid.

Making the Inventories available in digital format

Ms Ellen Berends, former Consul General of the Netherlands in Cape Town, initiated the project and was instrumental in the approval and funding of the first phase of the transcription project that lasted 15 months, from 1 October 2004 to 31 December 2005. The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Pretoria has generously approved an application for a second phase, running from 1 February to the end of December 2006.

The records of the Orphan Chamber are housed at the Cape Town Archives Repository in Roeland Street, Cape Town. They form an exceptionally rich collection of material covering most of the VOC period and the first decades of British rule at the Cape. The documents are heavily used as a result and are rapidly deteriorating. The records are unique to the Cape Town Archives Repository as, unlike the Council of Policy and Council of Justice records, copies were not sent to the Netherlands.

The estate records form the single most cohesive record of privately owned slaves at the Cape (and they were the large majority of the slave population). The transcription project thus responds to the growing call for a focus on the documentation of slave history and the identification of slave forbears.

All the documents were transcribed in the international platform-independent [XML format](#) (*eXtensible Mark-up Language*), where the coding was done according to the internationally acknowledged [TEI standard](#) (*Text Encoding Initiative*). [The Centre for Business and Language Services/Sentrum vir Besigheids- en Taaldiens](#) (Bellville, South Africa) performed the technical implementation and also provided XML and TEI training for the TEPC team.

The data is hosted by the National Archives of the Netherlands in The Hague as it has the capacity to do so. At a later stage the Cape Town Archives Repository will take over this responsibility, because it also keeps the authentic records of the Master of the Orphan Chamber.

Transcription and editing rules

The editors decided to have the texts transcribed as closely as possible to the original documents, and to allow alterations only if it would result in a smoother and more reader-friendly presentation of the text.

Editing was therefore done according to Afrikaans spelling rules that could be applied to the old Dutch documents with good effect. This was a logical decision because most of these old spelling applications were in any case retained in Afrikaans (e.g. using the initial capital letter for the names of months and days). English spelling rules were applied to inventories written in English.

- In accordance with the spelling rules the unnecessary use of capital letters and punctuation marks, especially commas and dashes, was reduced to what is actually needed to make for smooth reading.
- The spelling was only corrected in cases where the reading process was complicated by the writing of parts of compounds or derivations as individual elements, especially prefixes and suffixes not connected to the word stem, or the linking of words or elements that do not belong together. For example, *en de* changed to *ende* where it means ‘and’, but was retained when it refers to the word group ‘and’ plus the article of the following noun.
- Instead of using *ditto* (*ad idem*, *idem*, *dezelve*, etc.), the word itself was repeated. In cases of a grammatical inconsistency the word(s) concerned had to be put in square brackets, for example: *one book*, *three ditto* became *one book*, *three [book]*. Changing *book* to *books* in this case would interfere with the specific usage of *ditto*. The [.....] brackets were also used to represent gaps caused, inter alia, by damage to the original text.
- Abbreviations were left unchanged, because the normalisation of words and the writing in full of abbreviations would have resulted in a personal interpretation of the text.

Apart from the few rules that were applied, the rest of the text was transcribed without correcting spelling errors, or omitting or adding words or letters, for example *stinhout* (instead of *stinkhout*), *Plettenbbaaij* (instead of *Plettenbergbaaij*) and *buikblanken* (instead of *buikplanken*). The substitution of the *p* with a *b* as seen in the latter example often occurred in the language of some individuals, presumably coming from German-speaking regions.

The same principle regarding incorrect spelling applied to the English texts, for example *morning clothes* (instead of *mourning clothes*), *nine p: of stockens* (instead of *nine pairs of stockings*), *3 bottels*, *wite copper*, *silver purs*, *crocerij ware* and *two cubs* (instead *two cups*).

Due to the application of the above editorial approach the researcher has a quite neutral copy of the original text.

Source guide

Main sources

- Inventories of the Orphan Chamber at the Cape of Good Hope
MOOC 8 series, volumes 1-40
- *TEPC Transcription Project*. Cape Town, 2005.
- Cornell, C. and A. Malan. *Household Inventories at the Cape*. Historical Studies Department, University of Cape Town. Cape Town, 2005.

Apart from the above-mentioned Inventories of the Orphan Chamber of the Cape of Good Hope (volumes MOOC8/1 to MOOC8/40) made available either as an Internet-accessible source or on CD, the following additional references may be useful. The lists comprise of sources for general reading regarding the period as well as the sources used by the TEPC team members in their research.

Printed sources

- African Court Calender and Directory*, 1822. C.A.R.
- Beyers, C. *Die Kaapse Patriotte 1779-1791*. Kaapstad, 1929.
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www.capetranscripts.co.za

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National Archives and Records Service of South Africa

www.national.archives.gov.za/naairs – The search engine (NAAIRS) of the National Archives in South Africa for primary sources such as death notices, manuscripts, gravestones and photos, as well as a list of document references.

Genealogy

www.ancestry.mweb.co.za

www.ggsa.info – Genealogical Society of South Africa (GSSA)

www.ggsa.info/eggsa – eGSSA, electronic journal “Familia”, newsletter “Genesis”

www.sun.ac.za/gisa – Genealogical Institute of South Africa (GISA)

www.stamouers.com – South African ancestors

Huguenots

www.geocities.com/hugenotblad/begin-a.htm – Huguenot Museum, Franschoek

www.hugenotten-uckermark.de/Hughis2e.htm

Library services

www.nlsa.ac.za/ – National Library, Pretoria Campus

<http://natlib1.unisa.ac.za/search/> – University of South Africa, Pretoria

Maps

http://cdsm-www.wcape.gov.za/ms_internet/default.asp – topographical maps available at the Department of Land Affairs

www.hagsoc.org.au/sagraves/maps/times_map.php – “The Times Map of SA”

Museum services

www.museums.org.za

www.museums.org.za/iziko

Place names

<http://sagns.dac.gov.za> – official “South African Geographical Names System”, e.g. SAGNS, place name database

Slaves

www.museums.org.za/iziko/slavery/index.html – the history of slaves

<http://batavia.ugent.be/b@tavia.htm?http://batavia.rug.ac.be/slavery/bibliography.htm> – research on slavery

Surveyor-General

<http://oas.dla.gov.za/webapps/esio/searchproperty.jsp>

The Netherlands and other places

Archival services

Nationaal Archief

www.nationaalarchief.nl

Atlases

www.atlasofmutualheritage.nl

General

Dutch-Portuguese Colonial History

www.colonial.voyage.com

TANAP

www.tanap.net

www.tanap.net/content/activities/documents/resolutions_Cape_of_Good_Hope

VOC - general

www.voc-kenniscentrum.nl/

www.vocopvarenden.nationaalarchief.nl (Dutch version)

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www.vocsite.nl/schepen/detail.html – ships

Glossaries

– TANAP

www.tanap.net/content/activities/documents/resolutions_Cape_of_Good_Hope

Click on Glossary on the Resolutions (Afrikaans)

– VOC

www.inghist.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/VocGlossarium

www.inghist.nl/pdf/vocglossarium/VOCGlossarium.pdf – download and print

Glossary of terms collected from the “Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatien” regarding the VOC compiled by M. Kooijmans and J.E. Schooneveld-Oosterling

www.tanap.net/vocsources cape

VOC Links

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www.inghist.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/DAS/search

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www.selectbooks.co.za/intro.html – history and genealogy

History of the Orphan Chamber at the Cape of Good Hope

Introduction

Orphan Chambers had existed in the different states of the Netherlands for some time and this Dutch Law was extended to the territories of the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, VOC). Thus the Orphan Chamber of Batavia was established by resolution of the High Government of 1 October 1624. The instruction was issued on 16 June 1625 (N.I. Plak., I, p. 173). The Orphan Chamber in Batavia, as in other places, was responsible for the making of inventories, acting as the guardian of minors and administering the minors' property until they came of age.

A notebook used by the Orphan Chamber at the Cape (MOOC3/1/1) contains an extract from the Ordinance of the policies in Holland of 1 April 1580 and one from the declarations by the states of Holland and West-Friesland regarding the Ordinances of Succession of 13 May 1594 translated as:

The Dutch Law of Succession
being
the Law whereby all allodial or
property deriving from Wills
or final wishes, not disposed of,
must succeed to the deceased's relatives
and blood relations whether in South
or North Holland

This compiled from the Political Ordinance
at the Supreme Authority of State issued in the year 1580
which later declaration was issued
dated the 14th May 1594 as
well as the Proclamation germane
to the Succession ab
Intestato, dated
18 December
of the year 1599

The Orphan Chamber at the Cape of Good Hope

The initially small settlement established at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 experienced a gradual growth in both its population and the land it occupied until, by the time VOC rule came to an end in 1795, it had become a large colony. During the British period it expanded even more with the establishment of Graaff-Reinet and Uitenhage on the eastern frontier of the Colony.

During the VOC period the Council of Policy (Politieke Raad/Raad van Politie; *politie* means 'management') being the highest authority at the Cape of Good Hope, consisted of the functionaries who were responsible for ruling the Company's settlement, namely the Governor (*gouverneur*), his *Secunde* or Second-in-Command, the Military Commander of the garrison, and the Fiscal (*fiscaal*) who was responsible for maintaining law and order. The Secretary (*secretaris*) also called confidential secretary (*geheimschrijver*) had no vote, unless he had at the same time been promoted to Councillor. The Council of Policy discussed all problems that arose and took decisions on governing the settlement.

Structure of the Orphan Chamber

The Board of the Orphan Masters was established at the Cape circa 1673. The Orphan Chamber (*Weeskamer*) functioned as one of the sections that was introduced into the administrative system used at the Cape and had to report to the Council of Policy regarding the execution of its responsibilities.

In 1674 it was noted in the Government Journal that monies of the Cape Orphans were being administered by the Diaconate or Poor Fund, and a proposal put forward to separate such monies and place them with the Orphan Chamber (Journal, 9.10.1674).

A few months later the Journal recorded that ‘the Board of Orphan Masters, already created last year, shall be increased by a Company’s servant, so that it will consist of five members, besides a burger to be appointed as Secretary’ (Journal, 9.10.1674. The establishment of this Chamber was approved by a letter dated 28.9.1675, from the Seventeen to the Cape). Two of the members were chosen from the members of the Court of Justice and two from the Burgher Councillors.

The Board then consisted of a President, a Vice-President drawn from the Company and burgers respectively, two Company members and two burger members. A nomination of names was sent in every two years for Government to select from.

The Orphan Chamber that also had an office in each district, supervised and managed the properties of orphans and the inheritance of unknown persons. The Orphan Master (*Weesmeester* or *Weesheer*) was a council member of this institution.

The Orphan Chamber consisted of a Secretary (a bookkeeper who seems to have been appointed for an extended period), the Secunde (the Governor’s second-in-command, often responsible for financial matters), three other Company officials, and three burghers.

Because of the expansion of the Cape Colony local government had to be instituted. The free burghers also took part in the activities of the Council of Policy, the Orphan Chamber, the Matrimonial Court and the College of Minor Cases.

The Board of the Landdrost and (members of) the Heemraad governed the country districts. The Board served as a court with jurisdiction on civil as well as criminal cases, and also had municipal and related governing functions, and could impose taxes. It even had certain military powers and played a role in the safekeeping and defence of the relevant districts. The members of this Board, namely the Landdrost assisted by members of the Heemraad, were recommended by the Council of Policy and nominated by the Governor. The following posts were involved in local government:

- The *landdrost* (S.A. Eng. landdrost) was an official of the VOC who represented the authority (as in the Netherlands). He acted as chairman of the above-mentioned College. The *drostdy* was the jurisdiction of a landdrost. In South Africa in particular it also referred to the seat of a *dros* (the official).
- The *heemraad* (S.A. Eng. heemraad) was a free burgher who was appointed as a member of the above-mentioned College.
- The *veldkornet* (Eng. field-cornet) was an official in the local government and was subordinate to the landdrost. He had functions of importance regarding military, administrative, judicial and police matters. In his field-cornetcy the field-cornet represented the landdrost. In times of peace the field-cornet was the head of the militia and was responsible for maintaining order in his area.

In 1795 the British seized power from the VOC and became the new rulers of the Cape of Good Hope Colony. They stayed in power until 1803. In the early years of the British period the Orphan Chamber consisted of a President, a Vice-President, four members, and a number of clerks.

The Batavian Republic ruled the Cape from 1803 until 1806. The office of President and Vice-President was made permanent in the days of the Batavian Government.

The second British occupation followed the defeat of the Republican force at the Battle of Blaauwberg on 6 January 1806. The Orphan Chamber was replaced by the Master's Office and continued under the jurisdiction of the High Court and until 1828 the Presidency was held by the President of the Court of Justice.

Ordinance No. 33 of 1827 abolished the Courts of Landdrost and Heemraden and created the offices of Resident Magistrates. With the expansion of the population more courts of law became necessary; therefore districts were opened up and Resident Magistrates and Civil Commissioners appointed.

After 1834, private companies such as the South African Association for the Administration and Settlement of Estates (which later became Syfrets) took over from the Orphan Chamber as executor of estates.

Functions and duties of the Orphan Chamber

As was the case in Batavia, the establishment of the Orphan Chamber at the Cape of Good Hope arose out of the need to provide for the collection and administration of the property of persons who died intestate and left heirs who were absent from the Colony or who were under age. The property of persons who died on the voyage to and from Europe and found on board, was also subject to the jurisdiction of the Orphan Chamber. However, the Government was advised in a letter dated 30th March, 1711 that the Chamber was not to be burdened with deceased estates of Company's servants and burgers who had died on the voyage.

The main functions and duties of the Orphan Chamber were:

- the administration of the estates of persons dying intestate in the Colony or on the voyage and leaving absent or minor heirs, as well as estates of those who had not specifically excluded the Orphan Master in their will, or had specifically appointed them even where their heirs were majors and resident here
- the registration of wills of deceased persons
- the administration of minors' property
- receiving and paying to present and absent claimants the portions or legacies due to them
- keeping a death register of persons who died at the Cape
- recording the resolutions and transactions of the Board.

After the devastating effect of the smallpox epidemic of 1713, the Council of Policy empowered the Orphan Chamber to protect the transfer of property of all free individuals at the Cape. All wills and deaths at the Cape had to be registered with the Orphan Chamber but the Chamber only inventoried and acted as executor for the categories of estates listed below.

The Orphan Chamber was the executor of the estates of free persons:

- who left heirs under 25 (and unmarried) or of unsound mind
- who left heirs who were either out of the country or not apparent
- who died *ab intestato* or *ex testamento* (without a will or testament)
- if there was a specific request in the will or testament for the Chamber to act as executor
- if the will did not specifically exclude the Chamber from acting as executor.

The Orphan Chamber had to track down any possible heirs. Heirs residing outside of the country of death had to send a power of attorney proving their relationship to the deceased, and the Orphan Chamber would then pay out what was rightfully theirs. If an individual died without children or spouse, then the inheritance went to their next of kin, whether brothers, sisters, parents, or cousins (sometimes even to the 10th degree). If an inhabitant, or a stranger, died at the Cape without any acknowledged relatives, the property, after discharging the debts, was sold, and reserved for the unknown heirs, and every method was taken for their discovery. If no heir was found within 50 years from the date of death, the estate reverted to the Government.

In 1714 the Government issued to the Orphan Masters a set of rules and Regulations by which they were to be guided in the carrying out of their duties (Resolutions, Council of Policy, 26.6.1714). These instructions were taken from the Statutes of Batavia, together with a tariff of fees which were to be charged in administering an estate.

The following is a translation of the title and contents of a booklet (MOOC3/1/1, Received Instructions 1714-1831): Instruction of the Orphan Chamber of the Cape of Good Hope, which gives one a good indication of the various aspects involved in this institution:

Instruction of the Orphan Chamber of the Cape of Good Hope

Register	Fol:
Gravedigger	1
Notes	2 to 8
Pupils instituted as heirs	9 and 10
Sale	11 and 12
Delivering of evidence of caution and punishment	13 to 16
Remarriage	17
Who were orphans	18
Handicapped orphans	19
How not and how to place orphans	20
To collect debts and inheritances by summation and other means through deeds of the Master of the Orphan Chamber as binding as for ships	21
Not to allow letters from orphans to lapse	22
Support	23 to 26
Guardianship and investment of money	27 to 32
To sell the property of those orphans without income	33
The property of orphans remains common property until one of them comes of age, etc.	34
An orphan absent for 16 years disqualifies himself (herself) from inheritance	35
Litigation of orphans	36 to 38
Appeal	39
Estates of unknown heirs	40 to 42
To keep the secrets of the Chamber	43
Fines deriving from litigation in the Chamber	44
Legal assistance	45
Application for fines	46
Caution of the Secretary and salary	47 to 51
Salary of Orphan Masters	52 to 54

In 1793 renewed instructions were issued and compiled from the 1714 rules, from those of the Orphan Chamber at Batavia, from a sketch of instructions submitted to the Government by the Orphan Masters, and from a report relative to the improvement to the Chamber.

Provisional instructions were framed for the Orphan Chamber by Commissioner General Jacob de Mist but these show that they were evidently framed more with a view to confirm the existing rules than to introduce new regulations.

The following are two of the articles of the instructions laid down: Immovable property of orphans could only be sold by an order of Court, and such property had to be put up for public auction and sold to the highest bidder. A minor, absent from the country for sixteen years, could be publicly summonsed at his last-known place of residence. If it was ascertained what had happened to him, his heirs could receive his property upon giving security *de restituendo*. Persons had to obey a summons to appear before the Masters as if it had emanated from a Court, and upon a third default to appear they could be brought before the Court of Justice. From the resolutions sent from time to time by the Government to the Board and the instructions framed in 1793, it would appear that the Orphan Masters were given almost the same portion of authority and jurisdiction in testamentary matters as was exercised in earlier periods by the spiritual Courts in England (Botha, 1928: 20).

In 1822 William Wilberforce Bird, Secretary to the Governor, explained the system and process of inheritance at the Cape:

Under the laws of the colony the widow takes one-half, whether it be real or personal property, and the other half is divided equally between the children, whether male or female; and if no children, to the nearest relatives of both father and mother. No one by will can deprive a child of its share ... But a man can leave to his widow, in addition to the half she inherits, one child's portion. At the death of the widow unmarried, her half descends, in like manner, to the children; but if she has a second husband, and children by him, her property goes equally between such husband and the children of both beds, as does the property of the husband at her death.

If a married person dies intestate, and leaves children under age, the Orphan Chamber is at liberty, on the application of the surviving husband or wife, to suffer him or her to remain in possession of the whole estate, on condition that an inventory be taken, and a fair valuation be made of the same, according to which valuation, the half of the net balance is assigned to the children in equal shares, and left in the hands of the survivor, provided good security be given, that the share of each of the children will be forthcoming at their becoming of age. The principle of this regulation is, that it is in the interest of the children themselves to have their parent remaining in the undisturbed possession of his concern, in order to prevent the danger of loss, arising from a sudden disposal of the estate; and also to preserve more fully to the surviving parent, the means of educating his children (Bird, 1823: 54).

He also mentioned the following regarding the estates of military, which deviated from the rest:

Orphan Masters are in general to take charge and administer all estates ... with the exception, however, of the estates of military, leaving no children in the colony, which are to be administered by the judge-advocate of the garrison, or any other person duly authorised (Ibid: 53).

By proclamation of 26 April 1816, offices for the enregistration of slaves were established in Cape Town and the various districts. That in Cape Town was under the superintendence of an Inspector and Deputy, that in Stellenbosch under the Secretary and that in the other districts under the District Clerks. Slave owners were obliged to report births, deaths, etc. of their slaves; all sales and exchanges of slaves were to be registered at the office and a register kept of all proprietors and the names of their slaves. The district registers were to be sent up every month to the Inspector, afterwards known as the Registrar and Guardian (or Protector) of Slaves, at Cape Town.

This enactment had been passed owing to the numerous manumissions which had taken place and the increase of manumissions and "large class of Negro Apprentices, (which has of late years been, by decisions of the Court of Vice-Admiralty, greatly increased), and the expediency that the most minute precautions should be taken to prevent the possibility of such free persons, or their offspring, merging into Slavery, or being confounded with the domestic or other Slaves, the property of individuals in this Settlement" (Index to Slave Office 1/21). These Negro Apprentices, i.e. 'prize negroes' were people confiscated from slavers after Britain abolished the slave trade in 1808, and brought to the Cape to serve as 'apprenticed' labour.

Immediate freedom was not given to slaves with the abolishment of slavery, but ex-slaves had to remain with their owners for a specified period of time. The social and economic life of the apprentice remained unchanged. Regulations regarding food and clothing remained intact. The apprentices were able to receive a wages and the master could be fined for additional and unpaid labour. Since the abolition act, domestic punishment was no longer exercised by the master, but by the Special Magistrate. In *Breaking the chains* apprenticeship offences punished by these Special Magistrates are listed (Worden, 1994: 138-140). Isobel Edwards describes the status of the apprentice as follows: "From a judicial standpoint the apprentice was in a sorrier plight than he had been as a slave of recent years" (Edwards, 1942: 181). The privilege of the apprentices was that they had the right to complain to the Office of Guardian of Slaves against their owners and to purchase their freedom. In 1833 during the debates at Parliament, proposals of

manumissions were for deserving slaves, freedom to children born of slave women and self purchase schemes.

Prize Negroes were kept along with the other slaves in the Slave Lodge and indentured to colonists for periods of up to 14 years. The concept of indenture was sanctioned in 1812, and also used for Khoi children who worked as farm labourers to learn skills. Manumitted slaves were also often apprenticed to their owners for a number of years. There were instances where a slave had an apprentice in order to teach him a trade (McCall, 1904: 449). The slave, Carel of Mr de Klerk testified that he had to pay 150 rixdollars to the Clerk, Mr Ingram, six months after the boy landed in the Colony. Owing to this, he had the services of Farrel, the apprentice, for seven years and fed, clothed and taught him his trade. It was believed that slaves should be prepared for the labour market and society after their freedom.

An example of an apprentice is Mamsie, given to Thomas Melvill (MOOC8/32.14) by the Government for fourteen years and given back to the Clerk C: Blair at his death in 1814.

In another case, James Keeva was described by the agent of the Orphan Chamber, Christiaan Lind as a “prysneger of apprentice” in his inventory (MOOC8/40.27) at his death on 16 June 1824. James Keeva received Rd:s307:6:0 1/4 from the First Clerk, Thomas Drury, at the Vischratie Departement.

Evidence of nuances of slavery existed. It becomes clear where mention is made of slaves who were sent to the “banditen” in 1802 (MOOC8/23.30). Robert Shell mentions that there were a few important ex-sultans at the top of the prisoner slave hierarchy (Shell, 1994: 197).

In the inventory of Joseph Davey, 12 apprentices are listed in 1820 who were handed over to the Customs collector (MOOC8/34.46). In most inventories of the VOC period there were requests for slaves to remain in the families or be freed after the death of the owner, unlike in the case of these apprentices.

According to the provisions of Ordinances 104 and 105 of 1833, the Orphan Chamber was abolished and its duties were transferred to the newly appointed office of Master of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court of the Cape of Good Hope was established in 1827. Subsequently a code for the administration and distribution of insolvent estates was enacted on behalf of minors and persons under curatorship.

The Minister of Justice appointed a master for every provincial division of the Supreme Court. Masters of the Supreme Court dealt with:

- deceased and insolvent estates
- cases under the Farmer’s Assistance Act
- companies in liquidation and under judicial management
- curatorships
- guardianships and trusts in terms of the various acts.

They also assessed estate duty under power of delegation by the Director-General of Finance.

In 1833 during the Parliamentary debates, proposals of manumissions were for deserving slaves, freedom to children born of slave women and self purchase schemes.

Slavery as such was abolished in the Cape Colony in 1834 (Botha, 1928: 51).

Conclusion

The legacy of the Orphan Chamber still continues in the form of metres and metres of written evidence that resulted from the execution of the institution's functions and duties.

These documents of inestimable value include wills, inventories, vendu rolls, liquidation and distribution accounts, death registers, letters received, letters despatched, resolutions, *kusting brieven*, conditions of sale, *bewijzen* and miscellaneous documents.

Of all these documents from the Orphan Chamber that are vested in the Cape Town Archives Repository the inventories are of core interest in the project concerned. Hundreds of people from our past are represented in the documents that were compiled over a period of 161 years.