Negotiating Freedom: The Free Black Farmers of Jonkershoek, 1679-1710

by

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Compulsory Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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A b s t r a c t

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During the late seventeenth century, a section of Cape Town's 'free black' (*vrijzwart*) population, a group comprised primarily of formerly enslaved people, took up farming in the Jonkershoek Valley of Stellenbosch. Despite initial prosperity, these free black farmers ceased to exist as an independent socio-political entity by the 1720s. Scholars of the Dutch Cape Colony, such as Hermann Giliomee and Karel Schoeman, have attributed this decline to a lack of capital, high labour costs, the distance from the market and the specialised nature of wheat farming at the Cape. Yet white farmers, confronted by similar obstacles, managed to transcend them and coalesce into a permanent agrarian class. This thesis attempts to account for this disparity by examining hitherto unexplored socio-economic factors that contributed to the rise and fall of free black farmers in Jonkershoek, particularly the patronage network between the free blacks and the Van der Stel dynasty. An extensive perusal of archival sources and secondary literature has facilitated two key observations. Firstly, the influx of free black farmers into Jonkershoek was contingent on the direct intervention of Governor Simon van der Stel, who hoped to supplant the recalcitrant white farmers with a more compliant group of agriculturalists. Imperatively, Van der Stel's policy of encouraging free black settlement in Jonkershoek via land grants was maintained by his son and successor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel. Secondly, the association between the Van der Stels and free black farmers left the latter vulnerable to economic exclusion when Willem Adriaan van der Stel became embroiled in a dispute with the white settler faction and was subsequently dismissed on corruption charges in 1707. These findings demonstrate that, despite their status as free individuals, free black farmers occupied a precarious position within Cape society and were constantly compelled to negotiate their freedom.

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This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Jacomina Johanna van der Linde, whose unconditional love and encouragement helped me to persevere at times when I felt that I could not. I wish you could have been here to see this project completed. I know you would have been so proud.

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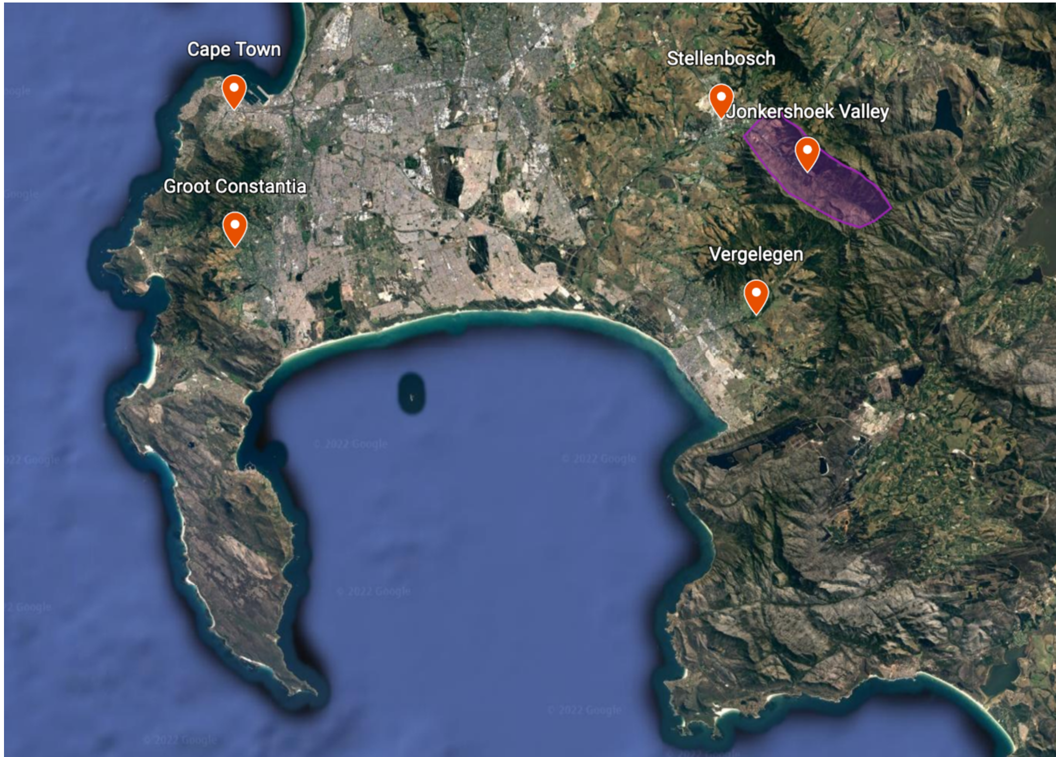
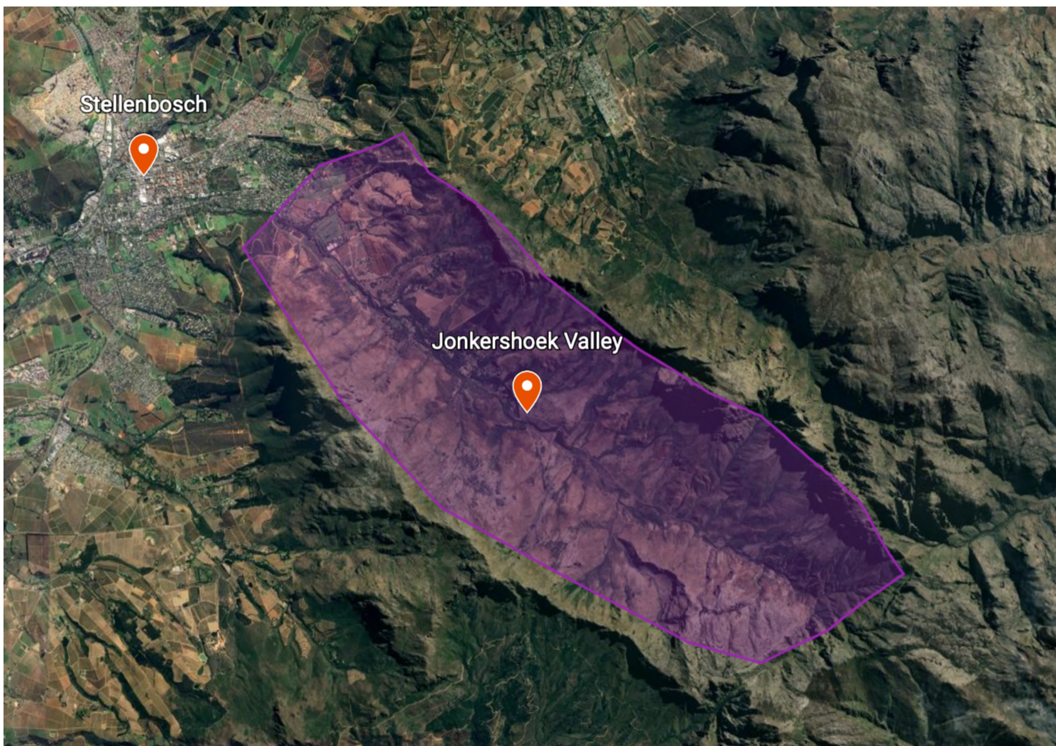


Location of the Jonkershoek Valley (shaded in purple) within the Southwestern Cape. Map data: Google Earth, Maxar Technologies.



Position of the Jonkershoek Valley (shaded in purple) relative to Stellenbosch. Map data: Google Earth, Maxar Technologies.

Abbreviations

BCE: Before the common (or current) era.

CE: Common (or current) era.

GWC: *Geoctrooieerde Westindische Compagnie* (Dutch West India Company).

VOC: Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company).

WCARS: Western Cape Archives and Records Service.

Glossary

Bandiet: Convict; typically sent to the Cape from Dutch territories in Southeast Asia.

Banneling: Exile; these included political prisoners, religious leaders, and members of the Indonesian aristocracy.

Council of Justice: The judicial and military court of the Cape. Established in 1656, the administrative structure of the Council of Justice mirrored that of the Council of Policy.

Council of Policy: The governing apparatus of the Dutch Cape Colony. The council was headed by the governor and included the *secunde*, the independent fiscal, the cellar master, the secretary of the council, the cashier, and the warehouse master.

Daghregister: Journal.

Drostdy: The district courthouse and residence of the *landdrost*.

Erf: A plot of land, usually in a town or city.

Fiskaal: Fiscal; official responsible for the colony's enslaved population and the levier of tax. Third in command after the governor and *secunde*.

Heemraad: Governing council of a district. Presided over by the *landdrost*, the *heemraad* was responsible for a district's judicial and administrative functions. The *heemraad* was also responsible for allocating farms, collecting taxes, and maintaining local infrastructure.

Heeren XVII: The Gentleman XVII, the Directors of the VOC.

Heeren XIX: The Gentleman XIX, the Directors of the GWC.

Hoge Regering: High Government; the central administration of the VOC in Asia composed of the Governor-General and Councillors of the Indies.

Kloof: A steep-sided, wooded ravine or valley.

Knecht: Servant, often a man officially in the service of the VOC but hired out to a farmer. Usually, they acted as overseers.

Landdrost: Magistrate.

Mardijker: Formerly enslaved individuals inhabiting towns and cities in Southeast Asia. Originally of South Asian origin and primarily Christian.

Monsterrollen: Muster rolls; annual census records of VOC colonies.

Octrooi: Patent.

Ommelanden: The immediate hinterland of Batavia (contemporary Jakarta, Indonesia).

Opgaaf: The annual return of population and production; hence *opgaafrollen*, the rolls on which these were recorded.

Opperhoofd: Literally meaning "upper-head"; in the context of the Dutch colonial empire, the administrator of a Dutch factory or trading post.

Plakkaat: Decree.

Pacht*:* Contract or tender, either as to a concession to supply a product to the VOC at a specified price for a specified period or as to a franchise of having the monopoly over the sale of a product. In the latter case, the franchise was actioned annually.

Plaats: Farm.

Regenten: The Dutch ruling elite.

Remonstrantie: Report.

Schepen: A municipal officer in the Netherlands and Dutch settlements, analogous to an English alderman.

Secunde: Literally meaning "second"; the deputy governor of the colony.

Smeekschrift: Petition.

Staten-Generaal: The States-General of the Netherlands; a body of delegates representing the United Provinces of the Netherlands (Dutch Republic; 1579–1795).

Trekboers: Nomadic pastoralists descended from European settlers.

Tuinland: Garden plot or market garden.

Vrijbrief: A letter granting burgher status or a manumission document.

Vrijburghers: Free burghers or free citizens, usually former employees of the VOC or GWC who, upon receiving a *vrijbrief*, were granted certain rights and privileges specific to the area where they settled.

Vrijzwarten: Formerly unfree individuals in Dutch colonies. These included enslaved people, convicts, and exiles.

Weights, Measures and Currency

***Lasten* (Loads)**: Measure of weight; approximately 1600,56 kilograms.

Muid (*Mud*): Measure of volume, approximately 109 litres.

Morgen: Measure of land, approximately 8,500 square meters (0,85 hectares).

***Roede* (Rod)**: Measure of length, approximately 3,600 meters.

1 *Rijksdaalder* (Rixdollar): 48 *Stuivers*, or 8 Shillings.

1 *Gulden* (Guilder): 20 *Stuivers* (in the Netherlands) or 16 *Stuivers* (in the Dutch East Indies)

1 *Stuiver*: 8 *Duiten*.

1 *Reale*: 3 *Gulden*.

Introduction:

Unfettered Farmers: Contextualising South Africa's Forgotten Agriculturists

Background

On a typically cold and wet winter's day in July 1690, Louis van Bengal loaded the last of his meagre possessions on a wagon destined for Cape Town. A few meters away stood the neat, whitewashed cottage which he had constructed for himself after arriving on the farm some six years earlier. It is impossible to imagine the range of emotions Louis must have experienced as he gazed over Leef-op-Hoop (*Live-on-Hope*) for the last time. The name, chosen with such care, must have seemed to mock him. Nevertheless, Louis' attempt at farming was merely one facet of a singular life. Born in the current state of Bengal, Louis was enslaved whilst still a child and arrived at the Cape as part of Commander Zacharias Wagenaer's entourage in 1664. By 1672 Louis managed to buy his freedom, and in 1684 he settled on Leef-op-Hoop in the Jonkershoek Valley of Stellenbosch. Remarkably, by 1690, Louis was one of several formerly enslaved people who had been granted farmland in Jonkershoek. The proliferation and gradual decline of these free black farmers constitutes the nucleus of this thesis.

This research project began with an ostensibly insignificant statement in Hermann Giliomee's *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*: "No statutory restrictions prevented non-Europeans from acquiring farms [in the Dutch Cape Colony], but it became customary, in the eighteenth century, for only burghers to receive farms."[1] As a South African historian, active at a time when debates around land dispossession occupied a prominent position within the national discourse, it seemed extraordinary to me that I had never encountered these non-European (or free black) farmers in existent scholarship. Therefore, from the outset of this research project, it was imperative to situate the free black farmers at the centre of my narrative while remaining cognisant of concurrent socio-economic developments. With the guidance of my supervisor, Professor Nigel Penn, I set out to examine the rise and fall of the Dutch Cape colony's free black farmers by orientating the focus of my study to the Jonkershoek Valley of Stellenbosch. My decision was informed by the high concentration of free black farmers in Jonkershoek and the insight that could be gained by using Jonkershoek as a case study for exploring free black landownership – both in South Africa and other Dutch colonies.

[1] Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 2003), 30-31.

Free Blacks (Vrijzwarten)

The term *vrijzwart/vrijswart* is employed by historians to refer collectively to formerly unfree individuals inhabiting the Cape between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The taxonomic principle by which this group is defined deviates from contemporary notions of race based on a knowledge of later South African history. For instance, indigenous groups such as the Khoekhoe and Xhosa were not described as *zwarten* (blacks) but by derogatory terms such as *Hottentotten* and *Kaffers*.[2] Thus, the manner in which 'blackness' was conceptualised by the Dutch East India Company and its employees when referring to 'free blacks' did not necessarily equate skin colour. Rather it signified that an individual was not of European descent, i.e., even light-skinned people such as Arabs and Chinese were viewed as 'black' at the Cape.[3]

The term 'free black' indicates an earlier, nonautonomous status which is congruous with the origins of these individuals as *bandieten* (convicts), political exiles and enslaved people. Wayne Dooling and Nigel Worden estimate that between 200 to 300 convicts were sent to the Cape from different VOC holdings throughout the Indian Ocean during the eighteenth century. This population group was augmented by a small number of political leaders, religious figures and members of the Indonesian aristocracy who had been banished to the Cape – Dooling and Worden suggest that no more than 250 such persons (including their retinues) arrived at the Cape during the entire period of Company rule. However, the most substantial numeric contribution to the free black population at the Cape during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came from formerly enslaved people and their descendants.[4]

[2] Robert Ross, *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870. A Tragedy of Manners* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33.
[3] Robert C.-H. Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), 238.
[4] Wayne Dooling and Nigel Worden, "Slavery in South Africa," in *Good Hope: South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600*, ed. Martine Gosselink, Maria Holtrop and Robert Ross (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2017), 125.

Slavery was established at the Cape in 1658 with the arrival of 174 enslaved people from Angola, who had been captured from a Portuguese ship. Between 1658 and 1808, an estimated 63,000 enslaved individuals were forcibly brought to the Cape. These individuals did not constitute a homogenous group. Estimates suggest that 26,4 per cent came from East Africa, 25,9 per cent from India and Sri Lanka, 25,1 per cent from Madagascar and Mauritius, and 22,7 per cent from the Indonesian Archipelago.[5] The loci from which enslaved people were obtained fluctuated over time and corresponded with European trading and shipping patterns in the Indian Ocean. Consequently, in the case of the Cape, Madagascar predominated during the seventeenth century, whilst the first half of the eighteenth century witnessed a more significant influx of enslaved people from the Indian subcontinent.[6] According to Robert C.-H. Shell's calculations, the manumission rate at the Cape, whilst never high, experienced a steady decline over time. In the seventeenth century, the crude manumission rate was approximately five enslaved individuals per thousand per year, decreasing to just above one-tenth of 1 per cent of the total population in the 1830s. Although these figures may appear insignificant, they profoundly impacted the early demographic composition of the Cape.[7]

The influence of convicts and political prisoners on the free black community derives from those individuals who decided to remain at the Cape after serving their sentences. These individuals, who were primarily but not exclusively men, enjoyed greater freedom than convicted criminals and often performed menial tasks to sustain themselves. Moreover, upon gaining their freedom, many chose to marry and settle at the Cape permanently.[8] The amalgamation of these groups – formerly enslaved people, political exiles, and convicts – through processes of intermarriage and assimilation generated the nucleus of the free black population at the Cape during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

[5] Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009), 145-146.
[6] Gerald Groenewald, "Slaves and Free Blacks in VOC Cape Town, 1652-1795," *History Compass* 9, vol.9, 965-966
[7] Shell, *Children of Bondage,* 383.
[8] Karel Schoeman, *Early Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1717* (Pretoria: Pretoria Book House, 2007), 321-322.

The legal status of free blacks in the Dutch Cape Colony remains a contested issue amongst historians. On the one hand, scholars such as Anna Böeseken, Con de Wet and Karel Schoeman maintain that free blacks enjoyed the same rights and privileges as the free burghers. Others, such as Robert Shell and Hans Heese, have suggested that they occupied a more ambiguous socio-legal position between free and enslaved. Shell compares this to the category of *libertus* or *liberta* that was used in Roman law to delineate a free person but not a full citizen.[9] A third possibility has been suggested by Teun Baartman, who equates the free blacks of the Cape with the *inwoners* (inhabitants) of Dutch cities during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Baartman, both the *inwoners* and the free blacks were like the burghers in that they could own property and engage in the same economic activities. Nonetheless, Baartman asserts that "the free blacks could not be elected to public office and they did not have representation on the Council of Justice as did the burghers."[10]

Baartman's view has subsequently been challenged by Susan Newton-King, who, in her perusal of the archives, has found "no evidence that freed slaves were actually barred from holding public office at the Cape." Furthermore, Newton-King elucidates that the *vrijbrief* (manumission letter) received by enslaved people once they were freed mirrored the *vrijbrieven* issued to VOC employees when they were granted burgher rights.[11] Crucially, this affirms the claims made by Böeseken, De Wet and Schoeman and signifies that the free blacks were not subject to any legal restrictions based on their former unfree status – at least not during the early years of the Cape settlement. This is evidenced by the participation of the early free blacks in trade and land speculation, not dissimilar to their free burgher counterparts. For example, as early as 1666, a plot of land was granted to the free black Anthonij van Japan by Commander Zacharias Wagenaer.[12]

[9] Shell, *Children of Bondage,* 383.
[10] Teunis Baartman, "Fighting for the Spoils: Cape Burgerschap and Faction Disputes in Cape Town in the 1770s," (PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2011), 71.
[11] Susan Newton-King, "Slavery, Race and Citizenship: The Ambiguous Status of Freed Slaves at the Cape in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Magnifying Perspectives. Contributions to History: A Festschrift for Robert Ross*, ed. I. Peša and J.B. Gewald (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2017), 105-108.
[12] J.L. Hattingh, "Kaapse Notariële Stukke Waarin Slawe van Vryburghers en Amptenare Vermeld Word (1652-1730)," *Kronos*, vol.14 (1988): 52.

While the notion of granting land to individuals who were not European settlers, within the context of the seventeenth-century Cape, may seem unorthodox from a modern perspective, it featured prominently in the minds of the Cape administration from the outset. In his diary entry of 27 April 1652, Commander Jan van Riebeeck enthusiastically commented on the suitability of the soil at the Cape for cultivation, which could exceed even the productive capacity of Formosa and New Netherland – adding that thousands of Chinese labourers would not be able to farm even one-tenth of the land.[13] Van Riebeeck ultimately could not obtain the Chinese migrants he had hoped for. Notwithstanding, his continued appeals for alternative sources of labour illustrate a certain ambivalence towards the free burghers, whom he considered backwards and lazy, and a willingness to grant land to colonists who were not European.

This constitutes part of a broader paradigm that existed throughout the Dutch mercantile empire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For instance, Jean Taylor indicates that, apart from being traders and shopkeepers, the *mardijkers* of Batavia also cultivated sugarcane on small plots of land outside the city.[14] Concurrently, some free blacks in Suriname owned land in the seventeenth century and used it to improve their economic position in the colony. J.M. van der Linde mentions a certain free black named Thomas Herman who, through his possession of a twenty-acre sugar plantation, was counted among the *kleine suikerheren* ('small sugar barons') in 1685.[15] Unsurprisingly, when a new agricultural zone emerged in the Jonkershoek Valley of Stellenbosch, both free burghers and free blacks at the Cape availed themselves of the opportunity to become farmers.

[13] Jan van Riebeeck, *Daghregister Gehouden by den Oppercoopman Jan Anthonisz van Riebeeck, Deel I 1651-1652*, ed. D.B. Bosman and H.B. Thom (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1952), 32-33.
[14] Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 48.
[15] J.M. van der Linde, *Surinaamse Suikerheren en Hun Kerk; Plantagekolonie en Handelskerk ten tijde van Johannes Basseliers, Predikant en Planter in Suriname, 1667-1689* (Wageninggen: H. Veenman, 1966), 97.

Jonkershoek

The Jonkershoek Valley is located approximately forty-seven kilometres east of Cape Town and five kilometres southeast of Stellenbosch. Ensconced by three towering mountain ranges, the valley has long been an attractive locus for habitation. The peaks of the surrounding Jonkershoekberge and Stellenboschberg, which are up to 1 500 meters high in some places, form a dramatic silhouette and are often clad in snow during the winter months. These mountains also sustain a myriad of streams which converge into the Eerste River, and which have, over millennia, carved up the area into a series of *kloofs* and hills.[16] Before the arrival of the first humans during the Early Stone Age, approximately 700 000 years ago, the lower reaches of Jonkershoek were likely covered by dense Yellowwood forests, with Fynbos and Renosterbos shrubs occupying the higher altitudes. This remained the status quo until the arrival of Khoekhoe pastoralists 2,000 years ago. The Khoekhoe frequented the Stellenbosch region in January as part of their annual migration. During this time, they would create trails through the dense undergrowth and burn patches of meadowland to stimulate grass growth which, in turn, would provide grazing for their cattle. The anthropomorphic alternations made to the landscape by the Khoekhoe inadvertently made areas such as Jonkershoek ideal for later settlement. In their detailed survey of Jonkershoek, Penny Pistorius and Stewart Harris posit that "the strangely scattered pattern of the first [land] grants are a palimpsest of Khoi land use."[17]

While the area of contemporary Stellenbosch had been familiar to European settlers well before the arrival of Governor Simon van der Stel, systematic colonisation only began in earnest following Van der Stel's exploration of the region in 1679.[18] The advantages of Jonkershoek as a site of agricultural production were manifold; the abovementioned Eerste River and its tributaries provided ample irrigation, and the surrounding hills were especially conducive to the propagation of vineyards. Furthermore, Jonkershoek was initially well-stocked with game, boasting several species of antelope and larger fauna – the last lion was reportedly shot in 1712.[19]

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[16] Francois Smuts, *Stellenbosch Three Centuries: Official Commemorative Volume* (Stellenbosch: Town Council of Stellenbosch, 1979), 28-48.
[17] Penny Pistorius and Stewart Harris, "Heritage Survey: Stellenbosch Rural Areas," Stellenbosch Heritage, accessed 28 August 2022, http://www.stellenboschheritage.co.za/wp-content/uploads/094_Jonkershoek_Valley.pdf.
[18] Smuts, *Stellenbosch Three Centuries,* 55.
[19] Pistorius and Harris, "Heritage Survey".

Imperatively, this initial period of agricultural settlement in Jonkershoek (1679-1705) corresponds with what Leonard Guelke and Robert Shell have termed a "golden age" for small-scale farmers at the Cape, with cheap land and labour enabling these farmers, both European and free black, to realise returns of over 20 per cent on their invested capital.[20] One of the first individuals to settle in Jonkershoek was Jan Andriessen de Jonker (or Jan Andries), who was married to the free black Lysbeth Jansen van de Kaap, and after whom the valley was eventually named.[21] The subsequent three decades witnessed a steady influx of free blacks and burghers, many of whom farmed in juxtaposition with one another in Jonkershoek. G.C. de Wet calculates that there were twenty-one free blacks, 80,8 per cent of the entire free black population, residing in Stellenbosch in 1685.[22] Among these were the farmers Anthony and Manuel van Angola (consortium), Jan and Marquart van Ceylon (consortium), and Louis van Bengal. All of them are examined as individual case studies in the second chapter of this thesis. No singular, decisive moment heralded the exodus of free black farmers from Jonkershoek. Instead, it was a gradual process that began as early as 1692 and terminated in 1720. However, available census records indicate that, by 1710, the majority of Jonkershoek's free black population had either moved to Stellenbosch or returned to Cape Town. Guelke and Shell attribute this phenomenon to a more general decline of petty farmers between 1705 and 1731, as the cost of land and agricultural production increased dramatically. However, this fails to explain why some free burghers, who began farming from an equally disadvantageous socio-economic position as the free blacks, were able to persevere when the latter did not.

Apart from scattered references in archival documents, the material legacy of these free black farmers is difficult to trace. In the three hundred years after they were first granted, their farms have been subjected to innumerable amalgamations, divisions, and sub-divisions. Moreover, the spaces they inhabited were transient structures, supplanted by larger and grander manor houses. In many instances, the only evidence that free black farmers had once been active in Jonkershoek is the perpetuation of specific farm names, such as Louis van Bengal's Leef-op-Hoop.

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[20] Leonard Guelke and Rober Shell, "An Early Colonial Gentry: Land and Wealth in the Cape Colony, 1682-1731," *Journal of Historical Geography* 9, no.3 (1983): 265-271.

[21] Penny Pistorius and Stewart Harris, "Who's Who in the Jonkershoek Valley," Jonkershoek Valley Heritage Survey: Who's Who, accessed 28 August 2022, http://www.stellenboschheritage.co.za/wp-content/uploads/Jonkershoek-Whos-Who.pdf.

[22] G.C. de Wet, *Die Vryliede en Vryswartes in die Kaapse Nedersetting, 1657-1707* (Cape Town: Die Historiese Publikasie-vereniging, 1981), 207.

Secondary Literature

Evaluating the conditions that precipitated the rise and decline of Jonkershoek's free black farmers constitutes the primary objective of the thesis. Pursuing this line of enquiry acknowledges that, while a distinct group, the free blacks were not divorced from the social milieu of the Cape during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Consequently, the elements that comprise this social milieu have informed the selection and organisation of secondary literature for this research project.

Cape Slavery

Research concerned with the free black population of the Dutch Cape colony must necessarily engage with scholarship on the institution of slavery at the Cape. Nevertheless, as I elucidate in my review of free black literature, it is imperative not to conflate these two related but independent fields. Robert Ross' 1983 publication, *Cape of Torments: Slavery and Resistance in South Africa*, is considered one of the first critical interventions on Cape slavery. In terms of my research, Ross provides an informative account of the solidarity and cooperation between enslaved people and free blacks, and how this contributed to cultivating a sense of community amongst the free black population.

In 1985, Ross' research was augmented by the publication of Nigel Worden's *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*. The premise of Worden's argument is that slavery in South Africa shaped the attitudes towards labour and race relations which would become entrenched in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Crucially, a considerable portion of *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* is devoted to discussing the precarious position of free blacks at the Cape and attempts to grapple with some of the challenges faced by those free blacks who pursued farming in Stellenbosch.

Ross and Worden's excellent publications notwithstanding, the most comprehensive study of slavery at the Cape is undoubtedly Robert C.-H. Shell's *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838*, first printed in 1994. Apart from supplying detailed information germane to the quotidian experiences of enslaved individuals at the Cape, Shell provides informative commentary on the nuanced relationship between enslaved people and free blacks, and the legal status of free blacks within the Dutch Cape colony.

Free Blacks

Historiographically, literature on free blacks within the context of Dutch colonialism has been auxiliary to discussions on slavery – with free blacks receiving little to no consideration. This is not to dismiss the necessity of scholarship on Dutch slavery. Rather, I contend that, based on the existing corpus, discourse on slavery within the Dutch mercantile empire should be in conversation with scholarship on free blacks and vice versa. Furthermore, while free blacks constituted a minority in most Dutch colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, their occupation of the nebulous space between free and unfree renders them the ideal subject for independent enquiry.

One of the first texts to pursue this approach, in South African history, is Anna J. Böeseken's *Slaves and Free Blacks at the Cape, 1658-1700*, published in 1977. While thematically separating her discussion on enslaved people and free blacks, Böeseken adroitly manages to create a sense of unity between these sections by tracing the trajectory of specific characters. Thus, the reader can follow the lives of individuals such as Louis van Bengal and Anthony van Angola from their arrival in captivity at the Cape to their eventual manumission and their careers as farmers in Jonkershoek. Another advantage of Böeseken's monograph is the comprehensiveness of her research – a feat accomplished by years spent working with the original, archival sources.

Böeseken's publication was followed in 1981 by two seminal texts, G.C. de Wet's *Die Vryliede en Vryswartes in die Kaapse Nedersetting* and J.L. Hattingh's *Die Eerste Vryswartes Van Stellenbosch – 1679-1720*. Although published in the same year, De Wet and Hattingh's accounts differ significantly in their treatment of free blacks at the Cape. This is undoubtedly a consequence of the period and each author's positionality. During the early 1980s, the apartheid government tightened its grip despite formidable internal and external pressures. Institutions, particularly universities, were not impervious to this fracturing. Universities such as Stellenbosch, where De Wet originally published his thesis, remained a bulwark of Afrikaner nationalism. Conversely, the University of the Western Cape, where Hattingh was situated, was often at the forefront of political activism against the apartheid regime.

Consequently, De Wet's work, concerned with the legacy of the European free burghers, merely pays lip service to the contributions of the Cape's free black population. Nevertheless, De Wet's research contains valuable statistical data on free blacks and cannot be dismissed. Far more imperative, however, is Hattingh's *Die Eerste Vryswartes Van Stellenbosch – 1679-1720*. The most apparent advantage of Hattingh's publication is it's privileging of a microanalysis of the free blacks of Stellenbosch, as opposed to a broader study of slavery and free blacks at the Cape – as in Böeseken's case. Additionally, Hattingh's inclusion of free black farmers in Jonkershoek has been beneficial to my research project.

Despite the limited scope of literature on South Africa's free black community, scholarship on free blacks in other parts of the Dutch colonial world is even more underdeveloped. An exception to this is Rosemarijn Hoefte's excellent article "Free Blacks and Coloureds in Plantation Suriname", published in 1996. Hoefte echoes my frustration at the disproportionate amount of scholarly effort devoted to slavery, and emphasises that there "exists no monograph, in any language, on the free population in pre-emancipation Suriname."[23] A similar lacuna exists in writings concerning Dutch colonies such as New Netherland and Dutch Brazil. Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis of free blacks within the Dutch mercantile empire is inhibited by the lack of a transoceanic approach that considers the social, economic, and political parallels between individual free black communities – a characteristic that I believe is symptomatic of Dutch colonial studies more generally.

Stellenbosch and Jonkershoek

There is certainly no shortage of literature on Stellenbosch. The principal challenge has been to identify secondary sources that comment on Stellenbosch during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and examine the Jonkershoek Valley. A valuable history of the area over the longue durée is supplied by Francois Smuts' edited publication *Stellenbosch Three Centuries: Official Commemorative Volume*, printed in 1979. That Smuts and his co-authors were cognisant of contemporaneous texts, such as Böeseken's monograph, is evidenced by their reference to free black farmers. Moreover, *Stellenbosch Three Centuries* provides detailed insight into the early administrative organisation of the region.

[23] Rosemarijn Hoefte, "Free Blacks and Coloureds in Plantation Suriname," *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 17, no.1 (1996): 103.

Similarly, Ad Biewenga's *De Kaap de Goede: Een Nederlandse Vestingskolonie, 1680-1730*, published in 1999, is a rich resource on the formative years of the Stellenbosch settlement – especially vis-à-vis the socio-economic dynamics of the colony. Although I disagree with Biewenga's assertion that race was not "a motive for human actions in this time period [1680-1730]"[24], the robustness of his research, and his exploration of the Van der Stels and their attitude towards enslaved people, renders his work invaluable.

A more recent and nuanced iteration of Stellenbosch's history is represented by Herman Giliomee's *Always Been Here: The Story of a Stellenbosch Community*. Giliomee's account, published in 2018, is the first to focus specifically on the Coloured community of Stellenbosch, from its inception to the present day. Giliomee appropriately begins his narrative with the migration of the first free blacks to Stellenbosch in the 1680s before proceeding to consider several free black farmers in the Jonkershoek Valley – including Anthony van Angola, Louis van Bengal, and Jan van Ceylon. The most important contribution of this publication is Giliomee's analysis of the aspects that precipitated the decline of Stellenbosch's free black farmers. Nevertheless, a crucial flaw in this analysis, ubiquitous among free black scholars and the raison d'être of my thesis, is a failure to scrutinise the relationship between the Van der Stel dynasty and the free blacks.

The Van der Stel Family

The celebrity status of the Van der Stel family, specifically Simon and Willem Andriaan, in South African historiography has stimulated the production of several key texts. These texts typically adopt a dichotomous approach, contrasting the innovations of Governor Simon van der Stel with the corruption of his son and successor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel. This perspective has subsequently been subverted – most notably in Anna J. Böeseken's *Simon van der Stel en sy Kinders* and Karel Schoeman's *Here & Boere: Die Kolonie aan die Kaap onder die Van der Stels, 1679-1712*, published in 1964 and 2013 respectively.

Remarkably for a book written during the high of apartheid, *Simon van der Stel en sy Kinders* does not eschew discussing Simon van der Stel's mixed-race heritage and the potential influence of this on Van der Stel's social and ideological convictions. Böeseken also alludes to Simon van der Stel's nefarious practice of granting land to his allies and the perpetuation of this paradigm under Simon van der Stel's successor, Willem Adriaan.

[24] Ad Biewenga, *De Kaap de Goede Hoop: Een Nederlandse Vestingskolonie, 1680-1730* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 1999), 274.

Schoeman's *Here & Boere: Die Kolonie aan die Kaap onder die Van der Stels, 1679-1712* is complementary to Böeseken's study, and laudable for the volume of source material it seamlessly integrates into the narrative. Of particular significance is Schoeman's observation that a distinct racial consciousness emerged in the immediate aftermath of Willem Adriaan van der Stel's deposition in 1707. Schoeman substantiates this claim by citing the racial rhetoric present in the *Contra-deductie*, printed by the anti-Van der Stel faction, and the dispatches of their leader, Adam Tas.[25] Schoeman's theory constitutes a critical part of this thesis and forms the basis for my examination of the potency of race in the decline of the free black farmers of Jonkershoek.

The Dutch Mercantile Empire

The Dutch Golden Age (c.1588-1672), and the subsequent proliferation of Dutch colonies across the globe, have been the subject of numerous publications. The most seminal of these texts is Charles R. Boxer's *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800*. Despite being published in 1965, Boxer's monograph remains a relevant and comprehensive introduction to the rise of the Dutch mercantile empire. Whilst limited in the detail it provides on specific regions, Boxer's emphasis on the parallels between settlements such as Cape Town, Paramaribo (Suriname), and Jakarta (Indonesia) has been instructive in shaping my conceptualisation of these parallels.

Pieter C. Emmer and Jos J.L. Gommans's monograph *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600-1800* (2021) is a worthy successor to Boxer. Like Boxer, Emmer and Gommans provide a detailed analysis of the different social groups associated with the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company. It is in this latter sphere that *The Dutch Overseas Empire* is especially advantageous, as it elucidates the intricate kindship and patronage networks which permeated Dutch trading companies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Emmer and Gommans' discussion of these networks provides an excellent framework for my analysis of the patronage networks associated with the Van der Stel family.

[25] Karel Schoeman, *Here & Boere: Die Kolonie aan die Kaap onder the Van der Stels, 1679-1712* (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2013), 212-214.

Research Questions

My research set out to determine why, despite initially propitious circumstances, a free black agrarian class failed to emerge in the Dutch Cape Colony during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This line of enquiry had a dual purpose: to re-evaluate existing hypotheses and suggest novel, hitherto unexplored areas of inquiry.

One of the first objectives in answering this question was to ascertain the origins of the Cape's free black population. This involved engaging with literature on networks of forced migration in the Dutch colonial world. It became apparent that the free blacks were composed of a bricolage of different groups (e.g., formerly enslaved people, convicts, and political exiles) with diverse ethnic origins. Furthermore, addressing this question dispelled preconceptions that free blacks were unique to the Cape. Instead, evidence suggests that free black communities were present, in one form or another, in most major Dutch settlements during this period. Of particular interest were the socio-economic parallels between the Cape's free black inhabitants and their contemporaries in Suriname and Indonesia. Thus far, no scholarly effort has been directed towards examining these similarities and the potentially rich information they may yield – a situation I hope to mitigate in my future research.

Another capillary of this research project considered how free blacks were able to acquire farms in the first instance. This concern was informed by the presumption that Cape society was racially stratified from its inception, and that this stratification would have made it incredibly challenging for individuals who were not of European descent to acquire land, and participate in the highly competitive Cape economy. However, scrutiny of the sources and secondary literature revealed that Cape society, at least during the first fifty years, was far more porous than I initially anticipated. This was most clearly evidenced by the frequency of interracial marriages[26], and land grants to free blacks.[27]

[26] See Hans Heese, *Groep Sonder Grense: Die Rol van en Status van die Gemengde Bevolking aan die Kaap, 1652-1795* (Belville: Wes-Kaaplandse Instituut vir Historiese Navorsing, 1984).
[27] Hattingh, "Kaapse Notariële Stukke Waarin Slawe van Vryburghers en Amptenare Vermeld Word," 52.

The most surprising revelation that emerged in grappling with this question was the unique relationship between the Van der Stel dynasty and the Cape's free black population. While free blacks had received *erfen* or plots of *tuinland* before the arrival of Simon van der Stel in 1679, it was only after Van der Stel's inauguration as governor of the Cape colony that free blacks were granted farmland on a regular basis – a pattern that accelerated with the succession of Simon van der Stel's son, Willem Adriaan, in 1699. Officially sanctioned support was critical in enabling free blacks to acquire farms, especially considering that most free blacks had very little start-up capital owning to their formerly unfree status. Imperatively, Van der Stel support of the free blacks was not without ulterior motives. Based on my research, I was able to conclude that the free blacks, especially free black farmers, inadvertently became pawns in the protracted conflict between the Van der Stels and the free burghers. The outcome of this conflict would have a deleterious effect on the autonomy of the free black farmers and contribute to the intensification of racial consciousness in Cape Dutch society.

An awareness of the complex relationship between the Van der Stels and the free blacks naturally cultivated a curiosity about the extent and robustness of familial and patronage networks within the Dutch mercantile empire. Two sets of relationships were of particular importance, those that existed among VOC functionaries, and the connections between different free black farmers. The presence of patronage networks, along with examples of extreme corruption and nepotism, is known to have existed in the early colonial period. In terms of the VOC, the most noteworthy aspects of these networks were their extent and propensity to acquire a quasi-hereditary quality. Both elements are exemplified by the Van der Stels who, due to their links with the families Six and Witsen, were able to obtain lucrative positions and ensure the transfer of power between different family members. Less well-documented are relationships among the free black farmers. The proximity of free black farms in Jonkershoek suggests that there must have been some degree of contact (e.g., Anthony van Angola and Louis van Bengal were neighbours). Furthermore, documentary evidence indicates that certain free black farmers stood surety for others and that they were occasionally involved in joint ventures. For example, in 1692 Anthony van Angola and Jan van Ceylon were reprimanded by the authorities for hunting together beyond the Berg River without permission.[28] Notwithstanding, the relative poverty amongst these free black farmers rendered it challenging to assist each other financially.

[28] J.L. Hattingh, *Die Eerste Vryswartes Van Stellenbosch – 1679-1720* (Belville: Wes-Kaaplandse Instituut vir Historiese Navorsing, 1981), 33.

Methodology and Sources

This study draws on a mixed source base, consisting of written archival sources and secondary literature. Archival material was primarily drawn from the extensive VOC collections in the National Archives of the Netherlands (Den Haag) and the Western Cape Archives and Records Service (Cape Town). These archival sources can be divided into the following categories: (1) Resolutions of the Council of Policy of the Cape of Good Hope; (2) Court of Justice of the Cape of Good Hope; (3) Inventories of the Orphan Chamber; (4) Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape; (5) Dutch Reformed Church Registers; (6) Inventory of Cape Title Deeds; (7) Inventory of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch. While I have a comprehensive understanding of modern Dutch, the aforementioned sources were all written in a seventeenth-century Dutch cursive script. To ensure accuracy, it was imperative to transcribe and translate the original documents as precisely as possible. Two electronic resources were invaluable in this regard, namely: 'Wat Staat Daer?'[29], a website that enables the user to practice reading and interpreting historical handwriting, and 'Historische Woordenboeken'[30], an online dictionary containing historical words and terms in Dutch and Frisian.

Another important consideration of this research project was how to circumvent the inherent bias of the colonial archive. In recent years the notion of the archive as a neutral space has been significantly challenged by a new generation of historians trained to 'read against the grain'.[31] The information revolution and the proliferation of public history have made it possible to challenge the state's monopoly of the archive, whilst concurrently generating favourable conditions for a significant reassessment of how the archive relates to the communities it is supposed to serve. This approach acknowledges that archives, mainly colonial archives, have traditionally been financed and controlled by the state. Thus, the state has been able to exercise substantial power in determining what is conserved and what is discarded – often to the detriment of minorities and those on the peripheries of society.[32]

[29] Wat Staat Daer? Online oefentool voor het lezen van oude handschriften, https://watstaatdaer.nl
[30] "Historische Woordenboeken: Nederlands en Fries," Instituut voor de Nederlandse Taal, https://gtb.ivdnt.org/search/
[31] Ann Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science*, vol.2 (2002): 99.
[32] Peter Claus and John Marriott, *History: An Introduction to Theory, Method and Practice* (London: Pearson, 2011), 398.

Accordingly, students of history are reinterpreting the archives and conducting oral histories with the individuals who experienced those archived events to render a more nuanced understanding of the disparate narratives within the archive. Others use a similar process by surveying photographs, engravings, and documentary art. Additionally, some scholars have spent considerable effort elucidating how individuals have repurposed archival documents to confirm old entitlements or make new political demands. Apart from the methods outlined above, historians such as Ann Stoler suggest that simply augmenting the existing archival records with external information is insufficient. According to Stoler, the porous and granular nature of the archive requires historians to reassess how they interpret existing documents, i.e., to read along the grain as well as reading against it.[33] The temporal scope of my research project and the subordinate status of my chosen subject matter circumscribed the number of external sources I could access. Therefore, tangible evidence – in the form of archaeological remains – constituted one of the few ways archival sources could be corroborated or challenged.

The advantages of archaeology to the field of history are readily discernible in the study of societies which lacked any form of writing or record keeping – such as many of the early polities which existed in Africa and the Americas. Nevertheless, archaeology can also supply valuable insight into literate societies, particularly on aspects concerning the lives of ordinary or marginalised individuals who were often omitted from written sources. Archaeology associated with literate societies, defined as historical archaeology, has traditionally been concerned with filling the gaps in historical knowledge. However, the last three decades have witnessed a shift in the concerns of historical archaeology towards examining social and cultural processes, and the material culture associated with them. Imperatively, the locus of historical archaeology has, in some instances, moved away from the metropoles of Europe to the former colonies.[34] This shift is indicative of a more extensive process within the humanities aimed at displacing a predominantly Eurocentric narrative in favour of a multifaceted account which attempts to amplify the previously silenced voices of the colonised.

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[33] Stoler, "Colonial Archives," 109.

[34] Pedro Paulo A. Funari, Martin Hall and Siân Jones, *Historical Archaeology: Back from the Edge* (London: Routledge, 1999), 2–3.

This approach has achieved considerable success within South African archaeology, particularly archaeology of the Cape, through scholars such as Antonia Malan, who deftly illustrate the complementary relationship between archival sources and historical archaeology. In attempting to render a snapshot of eighteenth-century life in Cape Town, Malan engaged in a process that she defined as 'parallel archaeology', i.e., the excavation of physical artefacts from historic sites, and the simultaneous excavation of archival documents relating to those sites.[35] This dual process enabled Malan to accurately reconstruct the lives of some of Cape Town's eighteenth-century inhabitants. For instance, in her study of the inhabitants of Block L in Cape Town's city centre, Malan combined records from the Orphan Chamber, the Deeds Office and archaeological reports to gain a sense of the material culture associated with different households. Whereas inventories from the Orphan Chamber listed the objects belonging to a property's free inhabitants, archaeological excavations yielded objects associated with enslaved people and free inhabitants alike.[36] As detailed inventories, census records and limited archaeological reports are available for some farms in the Western Cape, I successfully implemented certain aspects of Malan's model in this research project – such as my analysis of the slave lodge on Willem Adriaan van der Stel's farm, Vergelegen.

Chapter Outline

This thesis consists of three chapters that trace the trajectory of Jonkershoek's agrarian free black population from the inception of Stellenbosch in 1679 to the departure of the last free black farmers from the Jonkershoek Valley in the 1710s. This period roughly coincides with the rule of the Van der Stel dynasty at the Cape, specifically the tenures of Simon van der Stel (1679-1699) and Willem Adriaan van der Stel (1699-1707) as governors. The three chapters are organised chronologically and are unified by a shared concern with elucidating the conditions that made it possible for free blacks to acquire farms and, subsequently, give up these farms. Moreover, contemporary developments in other Dutch colonies, such as Suriname and the Dutch East Indies, are also considered.

[35] Antonia Malan, "Beneath the Surface – Behind the Door. Historical Archaeology of Household in Mid-Eighteenth Century Cape Town," *Social Dynamics* 24, vol. 1 (1998): 89.
[36] Malan, "Beneath the Surface," 110.

Chapter one examines how key events in Dutch history, such as the Dutch Revolt (1568-1648) and the formation of the VOC, stimulated the establishment and evolution of a heterogenous society at the Cape. The chapter suggests that, while socially stratified, there was enough plasticity within early Cape society to facilitate upward mobility amongst free burghers and free blacks alike. Apart from describing the social milieu of the free black population, this chapter also abjures conceptualisations of the Cape as unique by comparing the colony to other Dutch settlements in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. This comparison has the added advantage of underscoring the similarities between free black communities at the Cape, Suriname, and Indonesia.

The second chapter of this thesis is centred around the relationship that existed between the free blacks and the Van der Stel dynasty. The chapter begins by analysing the origins, legal status, and occupations of the Cape's free black inhabitants. Subsequently, the chapter introduces Governor Simon van der Stel, explores Van der Stel's perception of the free burghers, and how this perception influenced his support of a free black agrarian class in Jonkershoek. Three free black farms are employed as case studies: those belonging to Anthony and Manuel van Angola (consortium), Jan and Marquart van Ceylon (consortium), and Louis van Bengal. The chapter concludes with an overview of hypotheses thus far advanced by historians to account for the decline of free black farmers and posits that these hypotheses have neglected to consider the relationship between the Van der Stels and the free blacks.

Chapter three begins by examining the transition from Simon van der Stel to Willem Adriaan van der Stel as governor of the Dutch Cape Colony. This chapter is particularly interested in the influence of the former on the latter, and how this influence shaped relations with the free burghers and free blacks. The dual process of granting land to VOC officials and free blacks, initiated by Simon van der Stel to subvert the free burghers, intensified during the rule of Willem Adriaan. Predictably, this policy galvanised opposition against Willem Adriaan and his allies. However, contrary to interpretations of this protest as a unique articulation of nascent Afrikaner autonomy, chapter three illustrates that the events at the Cape merely constituted one facet of a much broader tradition of civil resistance in the Dutch colonial empire. Moreover, the chapter suggests that the conflict between Willem Adriaan van der Stel and the free burghers was far more decisive for the free blacks than the free burghers. Contemporary accounts and statistical data indicate that, with the departure of Willem Adriaan in 1707, free blacks became increasingly susceptible to discrimination from the free burgher faction.

The thesis concludes with a reflection on the legacy of Jonkershoek's free black farmers, and the implications of this legacy on current debates around land ownership and the racialisation of South African society. The section suggests potential areas of future research vis-à-vis free black farmers at the Cape and other Dutch colonies. Situated on the peripheries of colonial society, sustained research on the free blacks not only has the advantage of divulging more information on this opaque group but can also assist in qualifying how other marginalised groups are conceptualised within the context of the Dutch mercantile empire.

Chapter One:

The Entrepôt of Cape Town in the Dutch Mercantile Empire

The Dutch historian Gerrit Schutte remarked critically that the Cape Dutch Colony (1652-1795) is all too often studied in isolation, i.e., divorced from the broader context of Dutch mercantile expansion during the seventeenth century.[37] Indeed, this approach precludes a comparative examination of the socio-economic structures of Dutch trading posts, equating Cape Town's formation with a singular phenomenon. In contrast, this first chapter underscores the correlation between Dutch colonial expansion and the centrality of the Cape. An emphasis on this relationship serves to foreground four sequential, interconnected themes – the formation of the Dutch Republic, the intensification of Dutch trading ventures, the establishment of the United East India Company, and the founding of Cape Town. Furthermore, by explicating the genesis of distinct groups at the Cape, this chapter functions as a prelude to a more detailed discussion of the free black (*vrijzwarten*) population in the second chapter.

'*Eendracht Maakt Macht*'[38]: The Rise of the Dutch Republic, 1568-1648

Analysing the emergence of the Dutch Republic may seem peripheral, or even superfluous, to the narrative of the Dutch Cape Colony. However, the processes which enabled the Dutch to secure their independence from Habsburg Spain concurrently enabled them to become one of the foremost European colonial powers in the seventeenth century. Most of the present-day Netherlands came into the possession of the Habsburgs with the death of Emperor Maximillian I's wife Mary, Duchess of Burgundy, in 1482.[39] Notwithstanding, the relationship between the inhabitants of the Low Countries and their Habsburg overlords began to deteriorate in the 1550s due to the imposition of heavy taxes, increasing demands by the local nobility for greater autonomy, and the proliferation of Protestantism. Jonathan Israel suggests that it was the suppression of Protestantism through, inter alia, the infamous Inquisition which served to galvanise Dutch resistance against Catholic Spain.[40]

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[37] Gerrit Schutte, "Company and Colonists at the Cape, 1652-1795," in *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, ed. Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 284.

[38] "Unity Makes Strength." The official motto of the Dutch Republic (1581-1795).

[39] Robert von Friedeburg, "'Land' and 'Fatherlands'. Changes in the Plurality of Allegiances in the Sixteenth Century Holy Roman Empire," in *Networks, Regions and Nations: Shaping Identities in the Low Countries, 1300-1650*, ed. Robert Stein and Judith Pollmann (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 265.

[40] Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 127-139.

Conversely, J.L. Price posits that the catalyst for the Dutch Revolt was the "protection and preservation of the 'privileges', the traditional rights of individuals and groups, against what was seen as the absolutist and centralising policies of the Spanish government in the Netherlands."[41] This is a significant observation, as Dutch concern with safeguarding these 'privileges' would not only become a fundamental constitutional principle of the new Dutch state, but would also be exported to Dutch colonial possessions. Whilst the initial phase of the revolt was characterised by disunity and limited success, the northern Dutch provinces managed to form a united front against Spain with the signing of the Union of Utrecht in 1579. This was followed by the Act of Abjuration (*Plakkaat van Verlatinghe*) in 1581, wherein most of the Low Countries formally declared their independence from Spain. Nevertheless, Spain only acknowledged the independence of the Netherlands after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.[42]

Historians have long been fascinated by the circumstances which enabled a small number of rebellious provinces to achieve independence from the most formidable empire of the early modern period. Several factors favoured the Dutch. First, despite the impression of contemporaries, Habsburg Spain's financial position was precarious by the end of the sixteenth century. The near-constant unrest in the Netherlands had deprived the Spanish Crown of a valuable tax base at a critical time when its treasure fleets were coming under increasing attack from privateers. Concomitantly, its failed Armada against England, and Spanish support of the Catholic League in France from 1589 onwards, further crippled Habsburg finances. Second, the Dutch had a series of charismatic leaders around whom popular support coalesced, notably William of Orange (1533-1584) and Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1544-1619). As Land's Advocate of Holland (*Advocaat van den Lande*), Oldenbarnevelt was instrumental in securing the recognition of Dutch independence by England and France and outlining Dutch foreign policy – especially concerning colonial expansion. Third, the political and economic strength of the province of Holland was essential in sustaining the Dutch war effort. Unlike many other provinces, Holland had already developed a sophisticated fiscal system before the advent of the revolt. This system not only managed to withstand the turmoil of the revolt but illustrated remarkable growth by the 1590s. According to Price, it was the robustness of the Dutch economy in general, and that of Holland in particular, which ensured Dutch victory and entrenched the Republic's position as a significant power during the seventeenth century.[43]

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[41] J.L. Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Macmillan Education, 1998), 4.
[42] Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century,* 16-17.
[43] Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century,* 2-11.

Israel concurs with Price's assessment, citing Holland's domination of Baltic trade routes as early as the fifteenth century. The fifteenth century also witnessed the intensification of herring fishery in the North Sea – an industry that would be under de facto Dutch control until the eighteenth century.[44] Dutch involvement in these two spheres had significant ramifications for the nascent state. Increased employment, substantial profits and a surplus of cheap grain facilitated transformations in the economy and agriculture. Moreover, the nature of herring fishing and the transportation of bulk goods precipitated innovations in ship design. For example, the introduction of the specialised herring buss (*haringbuis*) enabled Dutch fishermen to out-catch their competitors, while the flute (*fluyt*) had superior cargo-carrying qualities. Equally important were technological advances in the form of wind-powered sawmills and methods of prefabrication which enabled the Dutch to mass-produce ships.[45]

The (Dis)honourable Company: Early Dutch Voyages of Exploration and the Establishment of Dutch Trading Companies, 1595-1621

The profitability of Spain's overseas territories did not escape the notice of merchants in the Netherlands. Acquiring a share in this wealth, whilst simultaneously undermining their advisory, became the modus operandi of the Dutch state during the sixteenth century. Initially, the Dutch turned their attention towards Asia, where they hoped to procure valuable spices such as pepper, cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon.[46] Equipped with four *fluyt* ships under the command of Cornelis de Houtman (1565-1599), the First Dutch Expedition to the East Indies (*Eerste Schipvaart*) set sail from the port of Texel on 2 April 1595.[47] De Houtman's expedition was largely unsuccessful in obtaining the desired spices. However, as Teun Baartman asserts, the voyage "demonstrated that Dutch seafarers could do what so far only the Portuguese had done."[48] Furthermore, cartographic breakthroughs such as Petrus Plancius' *Nova et exacta Terrarum Tabula geographica et hydrographica* (1592) and Jan Huygen van Linschoten's *Itinerario* (1595) opened new routes for subsequent Dutch traders.

[44] Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 16-18.
[45] Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century,* 39-49.
[46] Portugal was in a dynastic union with Spain from 1580-1640 (the Iberian Union). Therefore, Portuguese colonial possessions were perceived as legitimate targets by the Dutch in their protracted war with Spain.
[47] George Masselman, *The Cradle of Colonialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 62-88.
[48] Teun Baartman, *Cape Conflict: Protest and Political Alliances in a Dutch Settlement* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2019), 1.

This is demonstrated by the salient increase in Dutch shipping; between 1595 and 1602 approximately sixty-five Dutch ships sailed to the East compared to the fifty-nine ships sent by Portugal between 1591 and 1601.[49] Notwithstanding, Dutch merchants soon became victims of their own success as acute internal competition caused an increase in purchase prices and lowered sales prices in the Netherlands.[50] The States-General of the Netherlands (*Staten-Generaal*) had attempted to arbitrate the situation as early as 1598, with little effect. It was only after the intervention of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt and Maurice, Prince of Orange (1567-1625), that a solution was found in the formation of the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie*; VOC).[51]

Established on 20 March 1602, VOC's raison d'être was to consolidate Dutch trade in Asia by amalgamating several smaller trading companies into one large corporation. The Company's structure mirrored that of the Dutch Republic and was centred around different Chambers (*Kamers*), namely: Amsterdam, Zeeland (Middleburg), Hoorn, Enkhuizen, Delft and Rotterdam. Each Chamber had its own Board of Directors, with the VOC's general management represented by a central board of seventeen directors – the Lords XVII (*Heeren* XVII).[52] As with most other organisations in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century, the directors of the VOC were invariably linked by a complex web of patronage networks – among the founder members were the abovementioned Johannes van Oldenbarnevelt and Petrus Plancius. Crucially, the influence of these ruling families (*regenten*) was not confined to the Netherlands, but spread with the intensification of Dutch colonialism.[53] The VOC's founding patent (*octrooi*) gave the Company a monopoly on Dutch trade east of the Cape of Good Hope and west of the Strait of Magellan for twenty-one years. Additionally, the Lords XVII had the prerogative to formulate treaties of peace or alliance, wage defensive war, and construct fortifications within the area of their jurisdiction.[54]

[49] Baartman, *Cape Conflict,* 1-2.
[50] Pieter C. Emmer and Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 17–18.
[51] Charles R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1965), 23–24.
[52] Robert Parthesius, *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters: The Development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Shipping Network in Asia, 1595-1660* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 34.
[53] Emmer and Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire*, 19.
[54] Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, 24.

On 3 June 1621, the VOC was joined by its sister organisation, the Dutch West India Company (*Geoctrooieerde Westindische Compagnie*; GWC). The GWC emulated the VOC in many respects; it consisted of five regional chambers with nineteen principal directors – the Lords XIX (*Heeren* XIX). Moreover, the Company's charter gave it a monopoly on all Dutch trade between West Africa and the Americas.[55] However, whereas trade was the paramount objective of the VOC, the GWC was, from the outset, "much more directly intended as a means of weakening Spain by cutting at the American roots of its power."[56]

Mare Nostrum[57]: Dutch Colonialism in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, 1619-1667

The Dutch Indian Ocean World, 1619-1652

The Dutch were certainly not the first to identify the productive potential of the Indian Ocean. Indeed, even before the Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Cape in 1488, the Indian Ocean had been a conduit for the exchange of people, goods, and ideas for millennia. In the first century CE, transoceanic trade was initially confined to South Asian merchants. These merchants were later joined by Arab and Persian traders from the third century and Chinese mariners in the tenth century. Despite this bricolage of different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups, a common unifying factor between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries was a shared adherence to Islam. This is not to imply that other religious groups were absent from pre-colonial Indian Ocean trade. However, the syncretism imbued by Islam facilitated the near-effortless creation of trade connections extending from the coast of East Africa to the Philippines.[58]

The arrival of Europeans from the late fifteenth century onwards disrupted the status quo in the Indian Ocean in three significant ways. First, whereas South Asian or Arab merchants often represented the interests of a private financial backer or a shipowner, Europeans were predominantly in the service of a mercantile company or a monarch. Second, unlike pre-colonial traders who sojourned in multiple entrepôts throughout the year, Europeans were inclined to capture and permanently occupy strategic trading posts.

[55] Henk den Heijer, "The Dutch West India Company, 1621-1795," in *Riches from the Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Shipping, 1585-1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 78-85.
[56] Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century,* 36.
[57] Latin for "Our Sea". The term refers to a navigable body of water (such as a sea) that belongs to a single nation or is mutually shared by two or more nations.
[58] Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 18–19.

Third, European powers, notably the Dutch and the English, institutionalised the segregation of different population groups. While segregation was present during the pre-colonial period (e.g., sequestered living quarters for foreign traders), Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben maintain that the separation of different ethnic groups "gained a highly bureaucratic and legal nature under colonial rule."[59]

According to Robert Parthesius, the VOC's presence in the Indian Ocean can be divided into two phases. During the first phase, which lasted from 1602 until 1610, the Company attempted to integrate itself into existing Asian trade networks. Initially, this involved the exchange of European products for Asian goods. However, the Company soon realised that importing silver bullion from Europe and engaging in inter-Asian trade was the most effective way to obtain the desired commodities. This resulted in a 'fleet-organisation' whereby the VOC would equip ships for a voyage of up to two or three years. Naturally, this arrangement presented several logistical problems. Once the ships had arrived in Asia, they had to sail to several different locations, purchasing other Asian products for bartering purposes in addition to the silver brought from Europe. The only way to circumvent these challenges, and gain a monopoly over certain products, was for the VOC to establish a permanent presence at strategic trading points.

This second phase, associated with the period between 1610 and 1630, inaugurated the construction of fortified settlements throughout South and Southeast Asia.[60] The most important of these settlements was Batavia. Originally called *Jayakarta*, the city was under the jurisdiction of the Sultanate of Banten when the Dutch first arrived in 1596, and was eclipsed in terms of commerce by the larger ports of Banten and Aceh. Notwithstanding, VOC officer Jan Pieterszoon Coen preferred the smaller *Jayakarta* as a rendezvous point for Company ships. Consequently, on 30 May 1619, a force of around 1,000 soldiers under the command of Coen stormed the city and levelled it to the ground.[61]

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[59] Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies: A History of Creolisation and Empire, 1500-1920* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008), 4-15.
[60] Parthesius, *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters*, 31.
[61] Hendrik E. Niemeijer, *Batavia: Een Koloniale Samenleving in de 17de Eeuw* (Amersfoort: Uitgevereij Balans, 2005), 24.

Renamed “Batavia”, the settlement served as the capital of the VOC in Asia and was administered by the High Government (*Hoge Regering*), consisting of the Governor-General and the Council of the Indies (*Raad van Indië*). The governing apparatus of all subsequent VOC settlements was modelled on Batavia and fell under the purview of the High Government.[62] Despite this elaborate bureaucracy, VOC colonies in the Indian Ocean were, with a few exceptions, primarily concerned with trade rather than settlement. As Allison Blakely attests, the Company was content simply to control trade and the means of production via a network of strategically placed civil servants.[63]

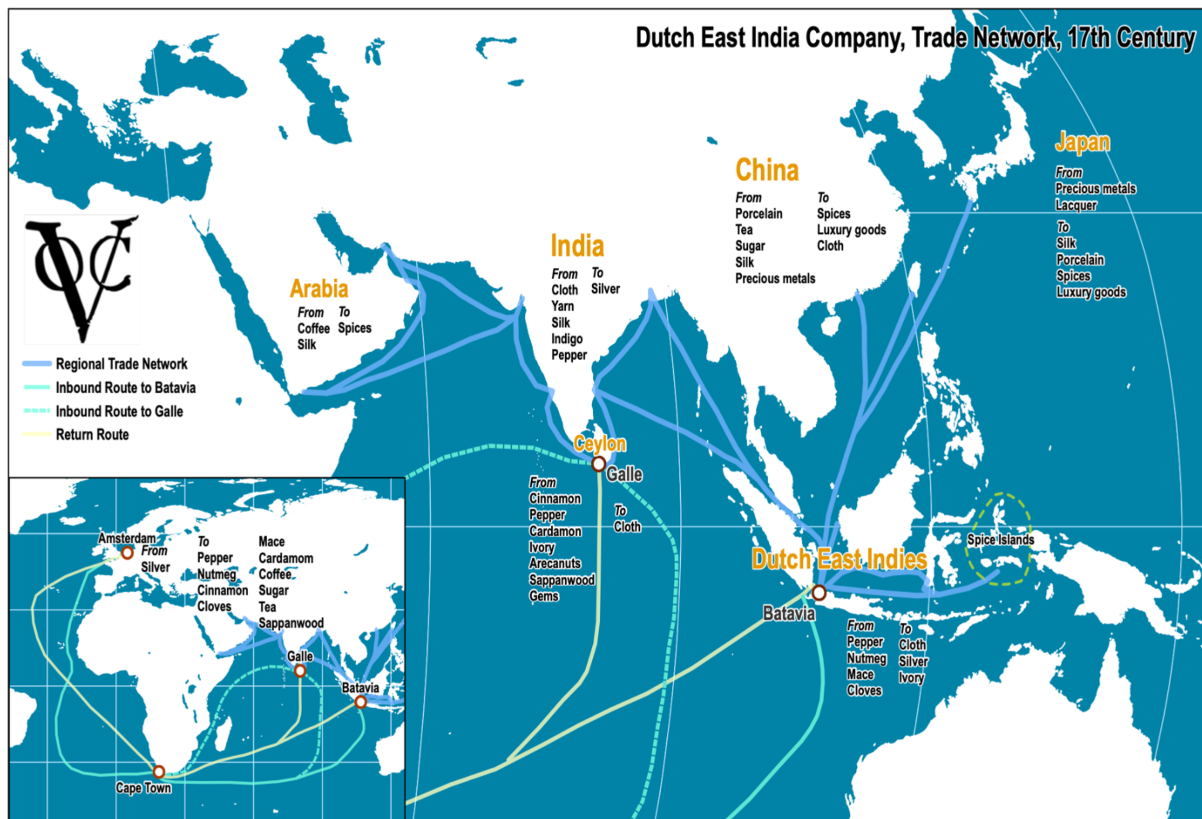

Figure 1: Jean-Paul Rodrigue. Map of regional and international VOC trade routes during the seventeenth century.

[62] Robert Ross and Alicia Schrikker, “The VOC Official Elite,” in *Cape Town Between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town*, ed. Nigel Worden (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 28.

[63] Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis University Press, 1993), 14.

The Dutch Atlantic, 1609-1667

The initial Dutch foray into the Atlantic was aimed at disrupting Spanish and Portuguese shipping. This objective was given additional impetus following the creation of the Dutch West India Company in 1621. As in the Indian Ocean, the Dutch hoped to simultaneously engage in trade by establishing a series of fortified trading posts. However, following the Portuguese conquest of Dutch Brazil (*Nederlands-Brazilië*) in 1654, and the loss of New Netherlands (*Nieuw Nederland*) to the English in 1674, Dutch mercantile activities in the Americas contracted to the Caribbean and the northern coast of South America.[64] The nexus of this reconstituted sphere of Dutch influence was the colony of Suriname (*Kolonie Suriname*). Before its capture by the States of Zeeland in 1667, Suriname was settled by English colonists and Sephardic Jews who introduced the cultivation of sugar; by 1667 there were already fifty sugar plantations in the area.[65] In 1682 the newly acquired Suriname settlement was sold to the GWC for 250,000 guilders (*gulden*) and subsequently transferred to the Suriname Corporation (*Sociëteit Suriname*) in the following year.

The Suriname Corporation constituted a curious conglomeration of different factions, including the City of Amsterdam, the Amsterdam Chamber of the GWC, and the patrician Van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck family. The presence of the latter is significant, as it reinforces the notion of a pervasive influence exercised by the Dutch *regenten* class – Cornelis van Aerssen was one of the founders of the GWC and his son, Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck, served as the governor of Suriname from 1683 to 1688.[66] Another branch of the Van Aerssen family was associated with the VOC. Nearly a century after Cornelis van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck was appointed Governor of Suriname, another Cornelis van Aerssen acted as the Secretary of the Council of Justice in the Dutch Cape Colony. Therefore, the aristocratic Van Aerssens were one of the modern era's first international, capitalist dynasties.

[64] Emmer and Gommans, *The Dutch Overseas Empire*, 143-146.
[65] Hoefte, "Free Blacks and Coloureds in Plantation Suriname," 102.
[66] Johannes Postma, "Suriname and its Atlantic Connections, 1667-1795," in *Riches from the Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Shipping, 1585-1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 289-291.

Suriname's administrative centre, Paramaribo, rapidly expanded following Dutch occupation. In the first Dutch account of the colony, J.D. Herlein reported that the settlement, which contained no more than thirty houses in 1667, consisted of 500 wooden houses by 1718. Paramaribo also housed the two councils responsible for governing the colony. The Political Council (*Hof van Politie en Criminele Justitie*) processed all governmental and criminal affairs, whilst the Judicial Council (*Hof van Civile Justitie*) dealt with civil matters. As with other GWC and VOC outposts, seats on these administrative councils were occupied by the upper echelons of settler society and high-ranking Company officials, with veto power in the hands of the governor. Suriname's role as an archetypal plantation colony producing a variety of tropical goods, such as sugar and cotton, is reflected in the colony's census records. Rosemarijn Hoefte estimates that by 1787 only 20 per cent of the colony's population resided in Paramaribo – the only substantial town in the colony.[67] It follows that this uneven population distribution would stimulate a socio-economic configuration distinct from other Dutch colonies. While this is true in a purely demographic sense, there are numerous parallels between Suriname and other settlements, such as Batavia and Cape Town, that have hitherto remained unexplored.

From Shipwreck to Colony: The Founding of Cape Town, 1647-1677

On 25 March 1647, some 120 VOC sailors washed up on the shore of Table Bay. Their ship, the *Haerlem*, had run aground en route from Batavia to the Netherlands. The captain and fifty-eight crew members managed to return to the Netherlands on another ship, leaving the remaining sixty-two behind to safeguard the *Haerlem*'s cargo. These men, under the leadership of Leendert Janszen and Matthijs Proot, spent the next year exploring the region and were enthusiastic about the possibility of "establishing a permanent staging post, complete with gardens that could supply the passing ships with fruits and vegetables."[68] After returning to the Netherlands with the VOC return fleet, where they encountered a certain Johan Anthoniszoon "Jan" van Riebeeck, Janszen and Proot compiled a report (*remonstrantie*) exulting the advantages of the Cape. They reported on the mildness of the climate, the abundance of game, and the affability of the indigenous Khoekhoe population. Imperatively, Janszen and Proot stressed that a permanent refreshment station at the Cape was achievable without much financial investment and could potentially become a profitable venture.

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[67] Hoefte, "Free Blacks and Coloureds in Plantation Suriname," 104.

[68] Martine Gosselink, "The Khoekhoe and the Dutch Around 1600," in *Good Hope: South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600*, ed. Martine Gosselink, Maria Holtrop and Robert Ross (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2017), 41-43.

Baartman emphasises that it was this final point that convinced the profit-driven VOC to sanction the establishment of a fortified outpost at the Cape.[69] Subsequently, the Company sent its formerly discredited employee, Jan van Riebeeck, to establish a refreshment station in 1652. The Cape was not terra incognita; apart from the abovementioned crew of the *Haerlem*, the area had been frequented by European sailors since Dias' voyage in 1488, and even these sporadic visits were recent in comparison with nearly 2,000 years of occupation by the Khoekhoe.

Originating in northern Botswana, the Khoekhoe were originally hunter-gatherers who acquired cattle in the first century BCE. This shift to migratory pastoralism precipitated the southward expansion of the Khoekhoe, as they continually searched for pastures that could sustain their herds.[70] When the first Europeans arrived, the Cape Khoekhoe were organised into several polities, of whom the most powerful were the Cochoqua, the Chianoqua, and the Goringhaiqua.[71] The political organisation of these groups was centred around a paramount chief whose wealth and power depended on the number of cattle he possessed. Unlike the Xhosa or European monarchies, the title of 'chief' was not hereditary among the Cape Khoekhoe and only rarely did a chief pass his rule on to an equally strong successor.[72] This cultivated a fissiparous society where one group under a resourceful or resentful leader often "hived off into new pastures and soon ceased to pay any but ritual allegiance to its former chief."[73] Imperatively, scrutiny of Khoekhoe society underscores two key elements: first, a lack of political cohesion, and second, the significance of cattle and access to pastureland. Both of these aspects would be decisive in determining the nature of Dutch-Khoekhoe relations following Van Riebeeck's arrival.[74]

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[69] Baartman, *Cape Conflict,* 4.
[70] Richard Elphick and V.C. Malherbe, "The Khoisan to 1828," in *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, ed. Richard Elphick Hermann Giliomee (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 5.
[71] Andrew B. Smith and Roy H. Pheiffer, "Introduction," in *The Khoikhoi at the Cape of Good Hope: Seventeenth-century drawings in the South African Library* (Cape Town: South African Library, 1993), 9–12.
[72] Robert Ross, "The World the Dutch Invaded: Pre-Colonial South Africa," in *Good Hope: South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600*, ed. Martine Gosselink, Maria Holtrop and Robert Ross (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2017), 27-29.
[73] Elphick and Malherbe, "The Khoisan to 1828," 6.
[74] Ward, *Networks of Empire,* 137.

The Lords XVII had furnished Van Riebeeck with clear instructions regarding the Cape: he was tasked with constructing a fort and establishing a vegetable garden to supply passing ships with fresh produce. Adjacent to the fort, named Good Hope (*Goede Hoop*), Van Riebeeck was to build a hospital, artisans' workshops, and a cattle pen (*kraal*) – for the livestock he was expected to barter from the Khoekhoe.[75] From 1652 to 1732, the Cape was governed by instructions from the Lords XVII and Batavia – evidenced by the nascent settlement's administrative structure.[76] In a similar vein to Batavia's Council of the Indies, local government at the Cape consisted of a Council of Policy, headed by the Commander (later governor) and eight of the most senior officers.[77] The roles of these senior Company officials included that of deputy governor (*secunde*), prosecutor (*fiskaal*), cellar master, cashier, and warehouse master. When transgressions against the law occurred, the Council of Policy would preside over trials as the Council of Justice.[78] In conjunction with the missives received from the Netherlands and Batavia, governance at the Cape was determined by the Statutes of Batavia. Promulgated in 1642, the Statutes were the de jure code of law in all VOC outposts and dealt with every aspect of colonial life.[79]

In accordance with the Statutes, Van Riebeeck had to respect the autonomy of the Cape Khoekhoe, as well as their laws and customs. Thus, not only was Van Riebeeck prohibited from enslaving the Khoekhoe, but he also had to maintain a peaceful coexistence between the Khoekhoe and the Dutch.[80] Despite this pacifistic mandate, stock theft and inexorable Dutch expansion culminated in the First Khoekhoe-Dutch War (1659-1660). This conflict was followed by the Second Khoekhoe-Dutch War (1673-1677), which effectively heralded the end of Khoekhoe resistance in the Southwestern Cape. Henceforth the Khoekhoe had to pay an annual tribute in livestock to the Company and acquiesce to the Company mediating disputes among Khoekhoe chiefdoms.[81]

[75] Martine Gosselink, "Jan van Riebeeck, the Founder of a VOC Post," in *Good Hope: South Africa and the Netherlands from 1600*, ed. Martine Gosselink, Maria Holtrop and Robert Ross (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2017), 53.
[76] Schutte, "Company and Colonists at the Cape," 284-285.
[77] Ward, *Networks of Empire*, 155.
[78] Baartman, *Cape Conflict,* 10.
[79] Susan Scott, "Our Legal Heritage: The Period 1652-1795," *De Rebus Procuratoriis* (1978): 250-251.
[80] Ward, *Networks of Empire*, 137-138.
[81] Elphick and Malherbe, "The Khoisan to 1828," 11-14.

Vrijburghers, *Vrij Bannelingen* and *Vrijzwarten*: The Socio-Political Matrix of the Cape Settlement in the First Fifty Years, 1652-1702

The VOC Elite

Company officials occupied the upper strata of society throughout the Dutch mercantile empire; men who often owed their positions to patronage rather than merit (e.g., the Van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck family). Pedigree, wealth, and education were prerequisites for securing a prominent position – in addition to membership of an extensive patronage network.[82] As in Batavia and Suriname, senior posts were seldom filled by locally-born Dutchmen at the Cape. Rather, to consolidate their regional control, the directors of the VOC and GWC favoured the appointment of those from within their circle. These individuals, in turn, ensured that lower positions were given to their supporters.[83] This patronage system was a constant source of tension at the Cape between Company officials and the free burghers.

The Free Burghers (Vrijburghers)

In his diary entry of 27 April 1652, Van Riebeeck enthusiastically commented on the suitability of the soil at the Cape for cultivation, exceeding even the productive capacity of Formosa and New Netherland, and that thousands of Chinese labourers would not be able to farm even one-tenth of the land.[84] Van Riebeeck was ultimately unable to obtain the Chinese migrants he had hoped for. However, a trickle of Chinese convicts and exiles arrived at the Cape throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Subsequently, Van Riebeeck petitioned the Lords XVII to release a few employees from the Company's service with the understanding that they would become agriculturalists. Moreover, these former Company servants or free burghers (*vrijburghers*) were expected to contribute to the settlement's defence – thereby reducing the garrison and military expenses of the Cape. The Lords XVII approved Van Riebeeck's proposal, and on 21 February 1657 seven farms were allocated to the first free burghers along the Liesbeek River.[85]

[82] H.F. Heese, *Groep Sonder Grense: Die Rol en Status van die Gemengde Bevolking aan die Kaap, 1652-1795* (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2005), 44.
[83] Baartman, *Cape Conflict,* 20.
[84] Van Riebeeck, *Daghregister,* 32-33.
[85] Schoeman, *Early Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope*, 51.

Before considering the impact of the free burghers at the Cape, and the Dutch colonial world more broadly, it is essential to elucidate the socio-political conceptualisation of the term '*burgerschap*'. In the Dutch Republic, 'burghers' denoted the inhabitants of a city who had certain economic, political, judicial, and social privileges.[86] Baartman indicates that the position of Cape burghers was not dissimilar to burghers in the Netherlands. This similarity is perceptible in the ways free burgher status could be obtained. Petitioning the VOC to be discharged from Company service was the most ubiquitous way through which individuals became free burghers. The petition was usually worded according to a set formula: the petitioner would introduce themselves, state where they came from, when and in what capacity they had arrived at the Cape, and request the Company to release them from service and grant them the "burgher rights of this place."[87] The petition was ratified with the swearing of an oath of allegiance and obedience to the Dutch Republic, the Stadholder, the Lords XVII, and the governor of the settlement. As in the Netherlands, Company employees at the Cape could also expedite becoming a burgher by marrying into a burger family. Furthermore, the children of burghers automatically inherited *burgerschap* from their parents.[88]

Crucially, the *burgerschap* propagated at the Cape retained the exclusionary and coveted position it maintained in the Netherlands; it was not available to everybody and was instituted to safeguard the privileges of a specific group. Nevertheless, whereas the Dutch burghers were redolent of a bourgeoisie class, those who established themselves at the Cape were usually less fortunate. Many sought employment with the VOC to escape poverty or the social upheaval of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648).[89] Between 1652-1682 the majority of the free burghers who settled at the Cape were Dutchmen.[90] These first colonists were later joined by other European immigrants, primarily of German or French origin, when the VOC offered free passage to the Cape from 1685 to 1707. Whilst the Company welcomed the influx of traders and artisans, it still placed a premium on enticing farmers to accept land grants.

[86] Baartman, *Cape Conflict,* 35-45.
[87] Teun Baartman, "Protest and Dutch Burgher Identity," in *Cape Town Between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town*, ed. Nigel Worden (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 66.
[88] Baartman, "Protest and Dutch Burgher Identity," 67-73.
[89] A religious conflict fought primarily in central Europe between the Protestant and Catholic states of the Holy Roman Empire. It was one of the most devastating wars in human history, resulting in over eight million causalities and widespread disease and famine.
[90] Herman Giliomee and Bernard Mbenga, *New History of South Africa* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2007), 46-49.

Initially, free burgher society at the Cape exemplified little social stratification – limited investment capital, climatic challenges and frequent raids by the Khoekhoe ensured that the first group of free burghers were often destitute. Nevertheless, by 1682, there were "marked differences in the size and wealth of individual undertakings."[91] This shift primarily resulted from increasingly favourable economic conditions, such as cheap land and labour. Equally significant was the neutralisation of the Khoekhoe threat following the Second Khoekhoe-Dutch War (1673-1677).[92] Consequently, before the close of the seventeenth century, a class of prosperous agriculturalists had begun to coalesce. According to Guelke and Shell, while the colony had a free population of only 102 households (92 men, 64 women, 162 children) in 1682, twelve of these households were the colony's primary agricultural producers and held over 50 per cent of all servants and livestock. This disparity of wealth distribution accelerated in the period between 1705 and 1731, as the cost of agricultural production increased. For example, whereas the minimal majority, to employ H.R. Alker's terminology[93], in 1682 had been 11,8 per cent, it had decreased to 7,2 per cent by 1705. Conversely, a substantial proportion of the Cape's free inhabitants lived in relative poverty, with almost two-fifths of all households owing no assets. While these households were primarily free blacks, there were also several single white men.

However, if, as Guelke and Shell suggest, most of these white men eventually succeeded in becoming independent farmers, it becomes imperative to establish why the free blacks did not achieve a similar level of success. For example, the free burghers Adam Tas and Henning Hüsing, both of humble origin, eventually became members of the Cape's landed gentry.[94] No archival evidence has thus far been discovered which indicates that a free black formed part of this class. For Guelke and Shell, the absence of free blacks among the Cape gentry is a corollary of racial discrimination: "If there had been no racial barriers among the free population at the Cape, statistically we would have expected to find at least one free black among the landed gentry."[95] Utilising the free black farmers of Jonkershoek as a case study provides an excellent opportunity to test Guelke and Shell's hypothesis.

[91] Guelke and Shell, "An Early Colonial Gentry," 265.
[92] Elphick and Malherbe, "The Khoisan to 1828," 13-16.
[93] The minimal majority is an index of wealth concentration. The smallest number of individuals who between them account for more than 50% of a good is considered a minimal majority with respect to that good. On the concept of minimal majority see H.R. Alker, *Mathematics and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 39.
[94] Schutte, "Company and Colonists at the Cape, 1652-1795," 304.
[95] Guelke and Shell, "An Early Colonial Gentry," 279.

The Cape's Enslaved Population

When the Dutch entered the Atlantic and Indian Oceans during the early seventeenth century, slavery was already entrenched in their littoral societies. In the case of the former, the Spanish had transported enslaved Africans from Sao Tomé to Hispaniola as early as 1525.[96] Meanwhile, in the Indian Ocean, slavery was the status quo for millennia before the arrival of Europeans. The Dutch adapted to these existing systems and justified the adoption of slavery through a mixture of religious and legal rhetoric. Citing the so-called 'Curse of Ham', the Dutch contended that dark-skinned people were destined by God to be the servants of whites. This stance was augmented by scholars such as Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), who purported that an individual could legally be enslaved in at least four different ways: by voluntarily selling themselves into slavery to escape famine, if they were captured in a just war, as judicial punishment, or if they were born to an enslaved mother.[97] In Suriname, a total of 185,000 enslaved Africans were brought to the colony from the onset of Dutch occupation in 1667 until the abolition of slavery in 1863.[98] While Dutch East India (*Nederlands-Indië*) did not contain the plantations of Suriname, excepting the nutmeg estates of the Banda Islands, slavery was nonetheless an integral part of colonial society. Indeed, a substantial source of unfree labour was central to the VOC's success in Asia, remarked Gerard Reynst in 1615, as "the heat is too much, and the liquor over-plentiful in all too many areas" for Dutchmen.[99]

The Cape settlement primarily adhered to the Batavian model of slavery. Although the first cohort of enslaved people at the Cape, who arrived aboard the *Amersfoort* on 28 March 1658, were Angolans captured by the Dutch from a Portuguese ship in the Atlantic, subsequent voyages would be confined to the Indian Ocean circuit.[100] Robert C.-H. Shell estimates that of the 63,000 enslaved people brought to the Cape between 1652 and 1808, 26,4 per cent came from East Africa; 25,1 per cent from Madagascar; 25,9 per cent from India; and 22,7 per cent from Indonesia.[101] During the early years, most enslaved people at the Cape worked as general labourers (e.g., constructing fortifications, cultivating produce in the Company gardens, producing furniture, and working as porters) and domestic servants.

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[96] Alex Borucki, David Eltis and David Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade to Spanish America," *The American Historical Review* 120, no.2 (2015): 446-460.
[97] Markus Vink, "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of World History* 14, no.2 (2003): 136-152.
[98] Postma, "Suriname and its Atlantic Connections, 1667-1795," 305-306.
[99] Niemeijer, *Batavia: Een Koloniale Samenleving in de 17de Eeuw,* 50-53.
[100] Anna J. Böeseken, *Slaves and Free Blacks at the Cape, 1658-1700* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1977), 11.
[101] Shell, *Children of Bondage,* 40-41.

Initially, the VOC was the largest owner of enslaved people, maintaining an average population of between 500 and 750. Conversely, the free burgher population went from owning less than 1,000 enslaved people in 1701, to 16,000 by the end of VOC rule in 1795.[102] Unlike other slave societies, such as Portuguese Brazil, the possibility that an enslaved person might attain their freedom was marginal. Between 1715 and 1791, the Cape had an average manumission rate of just 0,165 per cent per annum – six times lower than that of Brazil.[103] These low levels of manumission amongst the Cape's enslaved population can be attributed, at least in part, to the stringent regulations imposed by the VOC. The Statutes of Batavia decreed that an enslaved person had to be freed in the presence of a secretary and two witnesses.[104] Furthermore, before manumission could be granted, the enslaved had to illustrate their ability to comprehend, speak and write Dutch.[105] Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the manumission process became increasingly rigid. For instance, between 1652 and 1708, it was illegal to free an enslaved individual at the Cape without the consent of the Company.[106] Concurrently, if an enslaved person owned by the Company wished to obtain their freedom, they were expected to supply a 'sturdy male slave' as a substitute.[107] The low manumission rate notwithstanding, Shell maintains that these manumissions profoundly affected the demographic composition of the early Cape settlement.[108]

Knechts

Enslaved labour on Cape farms during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was often augmented by the employment of European *knechts*. Hermann Giliomee contends that *knechts* occupied a subservient status amongst the Cape's European population. For example, *knechts* had to address their employers as 'boss' (*baas*) and lived in their own, separate quarters.[109] The position of *knechts* did not remain static during the VOC period, and it is possible to distinguish between four phases.

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[102] Rik van Welie, "Patterns of Slave Trading and Slavery in the Dutch Colonial World, 1595-1863," in *Dutch Colonialism, Migration and Cultural Heritage*, ed. Gert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2008), 225-226.
[103] Richard Elphick and Robert Shell, "Intergroup Relations: Khoikhoi, Settlers, Slaves and Free Blacks, 1652-1795," in *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, ed. Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 206.
[104] Schoeman, *Early Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1717*, 306.
[105] Robert Shell and Archie Dick, "Jan Smiesing, Slave Lodge Schoolmaster and Healer, 1697-1734," in *Cape Town Between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town*, ed. Nigel Worden (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 133.
[106] Elphick and Robert Shell, "Intergroup Relations: Khoikhoi, Settlers, Slaves and Free Blacks, 1652-1795," 204.
[107] Susan Newton-King, "Family, Friendship and Survival Among Freed Slaves," in *Cape Town Between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town*, ed. Nigel Worden (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 158.
[108] Shell, *Children of Bondage,* 383.
[109] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 19.

In the first phase, from 1658 to 1687, most *knechts* were employed as general labourers. This shifted between 1688 and 1739 when *knechts* were increasingly hired as farm foremen. In the third phase, 1740 to 1795, *knechts* became associated with the role of private tutors for free burgher children. They continued in this function during the fourth phase, from 1795 onwards, with some also becoming itinerant buyers for butchers. Despite their various trades, the number of *knechts* at the Cape was in decline throughout the Company period. Whereas they comprised roughly 50 per cent of the entire free population during the late seventeenth century, by 1795 this figure had fallen to less than 1 per cent.[110]

Exiles and Convicts

Apart from the enslaved population and European *knechts*, convicts and exiles were an essential source of labour at the Cape. The VOC was at no pains to differentiate between convicts (*bandieten*) and exiles (*bannelingen*), with both groups forming part of the Company's unfree labour force. Nevertheless, the circumstances under which convicts and exiles spent their sentences at the Cape could be remarkably different. Convicts were nearly indistinguishable from enslaved people belonging to the Company; they were housed in the Company's Slave Lodge, received the same rations as the enslaved, and were employed in similar tasks.[111] Wayne Dooling and Nigel Worden estimate that 200 to 300 convicts were sent to the Cape during the eighteenth century.[112] Conversely, high-ranking political exiles often arrived with explicit instructions specifying where they should be housed, and the allowance they were to receive.[113] These exiles were usually political or religious leaders who threatened Company rule and were consequently kept in isolation once they arrived at the Cape.[114] Like the Cape's enslaved population, convicts and exiles arrived at the Cape from across the Indian Ocean world. Matthias van Rossum suggests that an analysis of the VOC's penal system simply as a source of forced labour risks obscuring the importance of the transoceanic connections facilitated by this system – most notably between Batavia, Sri Lanka, and the Cape.[115]

[110] Shell, *Children of Bondage,* 12-20.
[111] James C. Armstrong, "The Chinese Exiles," in *Cape Town Between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town*, ed. Nigel Worden (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 104-108.
[112] Dooling and Worden, "Slavery in South Africa," 125.
[113] Ward, *Networks of Empire*, 259.
[114] Schoeman, *Early Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1717*, 322.
[115] Matthias van Rossum, "The Dutch East India Company in Asia, 1595-1811," in *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies*, ed. Clare Anderson (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1985), 375-376.

The diverse origins of convicts and exiles at the Cape can be further extrapolated from contemporary eyewitness accounts. For instance, in 1709 the Dutch naturalist François Valentijn (1666-1727) noted that there were fifty-one convicts on Robben Island, including two girls (*myden*), eighteen Europeans and thirty-one '*inlanders*' – "being Chinese, Malay, and men from Sri Lanka and Macassar".[116] Once a convict or exile had served their sentence, they automatically became a free exile (*vry banneling*) and had to decide whether to repatriate to their country of origin or remain. The expense associated with repatriation invariably induced many to settle at the Cape permanently.[117]

The Free Blacks (Vrijzwarten)

The free blacks (*vrijzwarten* or *vrijswarten*) constitute one of the most enigmatic population groups at the Cape. There are two primary reasons for this. The first pertains to nomenclature; the Dutch word *zwarten* or *swerten* (meaning 'black') in the term *vrijzwarten* is something of a misnomer. Contrary to contemporary notions of race, 'black' within the context of the Dutch Indian Ocean world did not necessarily signify African ancestry. This is evidenced by the etymology of the word in Southeast Asia. Hendrik Niemeijer states that from 1619 onwards, the Dutch in Batavia employed the word *swerten* in a derogatory way to refer to a group called the *mardijkers*.[118]

In juxtaposition to the negative connotations implied by the use of *swerten*, the root of the word *mardijker* derives from the Indonesian for 'freedom' – *merdeka*. This, in turn, is derived from the Sanskrit word *Maharddhika*, meaning "great man" or "high and mighty". During the sixteenth century, the Portuguese applied the term *merdeka* to formerly enslaved individuals, especially those brought to Indonesia from India, who had converted to Catholicism and assimilated elements of Portuguese culture. Following the Dutch conquest of the Indonesia Archipelago in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the *mardijkers* became a discernible segment of colonial society in the Dutch East Indies.[119] Notwithstanding, to explicate the correlation between *mardijker* and *swerten*, it is imperative to understand the pre-colonial Indonesian conceptualisation of skin colour. Traditionally, individuals with a darker skin tone were identified as 'beach folk' (*orang pantai*) or '*keling*' (now considered a slur).

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[116] Schoeman, *Early Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1717*, 321-322.
[117] Armstrong, "The Chinese Exiles," 105.
[118] Niemeijer, *Batavia: Een Koloniale Samenleving in de 17de Eeuw,* 41.
[119] Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*, 47.

The word '*keling*' forms part of the term *orang keling*, which was used by pre-colonial Indonesians to describe mariners from the east coast of India – such as those from the Kingdom of Kalinga.[120] Given the Indian origins of the *mardijkers*, it is highly probable that the Dutch grafted their racial biases onto a pre-existing etymological framework that equated the Indian inhabitants of Southeast Asian cities, such as Batavia, with dark skin.

The second factor which has hindered the formulation of a succinct definition of 'free black' is the lack of consensus amongst historians as to whom the term should encompass. Archival records indicate that in the Dutch East Indies at least, the term *vrijzwart* was used interchangeably with *mardijker* to refer to formerly enslaved people. Anna Böeseken, citing W. Coolhaas' edited volume *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*,[121] states that the term *vrijzwart* appears only twice and in both instances is linked with the term *vrije mardijker*.[122] There is no evidence to suggest a similar conflation at the Cape. Instead, the point of contention amongst historians of the Dutch Cape Colony is whether the term 'free black' should be confined to the descendants of formerly enslaved people, or if it should include free exiles and convicts. A perusal of the VOC muster rolls (*monsterrollen*) for the period 1679-1710 illustrates that whilst most of the free black population at the Cape during this time constituted enslaved people who had obtained their freedom, it would be erroneous to suggest that the term 'free black' was exclusively reserved for formerly enslaved individuals.[123] For instance, Domingo van Bengalen arrived at the Cape on 29 May 1659 along with two other convicts aboard the ship *Princes Roijael* [sic].[124] Domingo must have satisfactorily served his sentence or was pardoned, for he is recorded in the muster roll of 1688 as a free person married to Maria van Bengalen.[125]

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[120] Niemeijer, *Batavia: Een Koloniale Samenleving in de 17de Eeuw,* 40-41.

[121] A collection of more than 5,000 printed pages in which letters written by the Governor-General and Council of Batavia to the Lords XVII in the Netherlands are recorded.

[122] Böeseken, *Slaves and Free Blacks at the Cape*, 77.

[123] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1660-1700*, VC 39, vol.1; WCARS, *General Muster Rolls: Free Burghers and their Wives, 1702-1725*, VC 49, vol.1.

[124] WCARS, *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of the Cape of Good Hope*, C.2, 29 May 1659, 2-5.

[125] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1660-1700*, VC 39, vol.1, 1688, 81.

The Dutch Cape Colony originated within a milieu of Dutch mercantile expansion during the seventeenth century. This chapter has illustrated that these developments would have been untenable without innovations effected by the Dutch Revolt (e.g., improvements in ship design, a robust fiscal system, and a desire to subvert Habsburg interests in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans). Notwithstanding, the Dutch ambition to access the lucrative spice trade in Asia ultimately culminated in Cape Town's establishment in 1652. By the time of Jan van Riebeeck's departure in 1662, the Cape settlement had evolved into a heterogenous society that, over the next hundred years, would become increasingly stratified by class and race. These divisions and their repercussions are examined in the second chapter through the lens of the free black farmers of the Jonkershoek Valley.

Chapter Two:

The Emergence of a Free Black Agrarian Class at the Cape, 1652-1710

In the ten years immediately following its establishment, the Dutch Cape Colony was transformed from a simple refreshment station into a burgeoning colony. Chapter one underscored the strategic importance of the Cape in the mercantile endeavours of the ascending Dutch Republic, and outlined the multifaceted nature of early Cape society. Subsequently, the premise of the second chapter is the free black (*vrijzwarten*) community – one of the most enigmatic and contested groups in the history of the Dutch Cape Colony. In particular, this chapter is concerned with the socio-economic conditions that facilitated the settlement of free black farmers in the Jonkershoek Valley of Stellenbosch. It begins by exploring the emergence of a free black society in Table Valley, before proceeding to consider the migration of several free blacks to Stellenbosch, and their relationship with the Van der Stel dynasty.

Butchers, Bakers, and Candlestick Makers: Free Blacks in the Peri-Urban Environment of Table Valley, 1652-1679

As outlined in chapter one, the free blacks of the Cape were primarily, though not exclusively, formerly enslaved people. This had significant repercussions in terms of their ethnic composition, legal status, population growth and occupations. To reiterate, the term free black (*vrijzwart*) did not necessarily signify African ancestry. In the Dutch Indian Ocean world, *vrijzwart* was employed interchangeably with the term *mardijker* to denote enslaved people who had been manumitted, mostly of Indian origin. Furthermore, Hans Heese, citing the Cape muster roll of 1705, estimates that at least 61 per cent of free blacks were originally from Asia, whilst Africa and Madagascar combined accounted for less than 10 per cent.[126] The legal status of free blacks within the Dutch Cape Colony remains a disputed issue amongst historians. Notwithstanding, Susan Newton-King's excellent historiographical review of the subject, and available archival evidence, indicate that free blacks were not subject to any legal discrimination – at least not during the initial period of colonisation. Like their burgher counterparts, free blacks could own land and, theoretically, hold public office. Their absence from the latter was principally due to their lower economic status compared to wealthy free burghers.[127]

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[126] Heese, *Groep Sonder Grense*, 57.

[127] There is substantial evidence to suggest that the Cape was a plutocratic society throughout much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See: Johan Fourie and Dieter von Fintel, "A History with Evidence: Income Inequality in the Dutch Cape Colony," *Economic History of Developing Regions* 26, no.1 (2011)

A strong argument can also be made for a similar legal status being shared by free blacks and burghers based on the participation of both groups in the slave trade. However, their motives were decidedly different. Whereas most free burghers viewed enslaved people as investments, many free blacks engaged in slavery to free family members or friends. This is substantiated by Elphick and Shell's finding that more than a quarter of manumitting owners at the Cape during the eighteenth century were free blacks.[128] Additionally, Shell, referencing evidence collected from baptismal records and wills, states that enslaved people purchased by free blacks were absorbed into the free black community: "Slaves entering the free black community via the domestic market were incorporated into their families and later manumitted de facto, if not always de jure."[129] Curiously, neither Elphick nor Shell appear to have considered this practice in relation to the limited natural increase of the free black population. Free blacks constituted a minority amongst the Cape's free population from the outset, a phenomenon that intensified during the eighteenth century. For example, in 1670, free blacks represented just over 7 per cent of the overall free population.[130] By 1770 this figure had decreased to less than 5 per cent.[131] This can be attributed to the low fertility rate amongst free black couples, and the high infant mortality rate associated with the period. Consequently, high manumission levels amongst free blacks can also be construed as an attempt to stimulate the development of a viable, self-perpetuating community.

In their occupations, many free blacks continued the activities they had become accustomed to whilst enslaved, incarcerated, or exiled.[132] These were usually gendered and primarily confined to the domestic or artisanal spheres. Antonia Malan observes that free black women in early eighteenth-century Cape Town sustained themselves as washerwomen, cooks, or domestic servants. Similarly, free black men were employed as bakers, chandlers, masons, and fishermen.[133] The economic pursuits of free blacks were often circumscribed by the financial disadvantages associated with their previous unfree status. Nonetheless, some free blacks managed to transcend these restrictions by marrying free burghers or through their ingenuity.

[128] Elphick and Robert Shell, "Intergroup Relations: Khoikhoi, Settlers, Slaves and Free Blacks, 1652-1795," 208.
[129] Shell, *Children of Bondage,* 119.
[130] National Archives of the Netherlands, *Inventaris van het archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), 1602-1795 (1811)*, catalogue reference 1.04.02, inventory number 4004-4005, 611-612.
[131] National Archives of the Netherlands, *Inventaris van het archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), 1602-1795 (1811)*, catalogue reference 1.04.02, inventory number 4262, 7-47.
[132] Schoeman, *Early Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1717*, 339-340.
[133] Antonia Malan, "The Cultural Landscape," in *Cape Town Between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town*, ed. Nigel Worden (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2012), 22.

One economic sector accessible to free burghers and free blacks alike was farming; initially in Table Valley, but later this extended to Stellenbosch and Drakenstein. The nature of farming at the Cape during this period was determined by geographical location and size. For example, Malan distinguishes between three categories of land grants in Table Valley during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a lot (*erf*), garden land (*tuinland*), and farm (*plaats*).[134] Unlike the large-scale farms in the interior, which specialised in wheat and livestock, the much smaller farms in Table Valley were best suited as market gardens – with their proximity to Cape Town compensating for their size.[135] The first recorded land grant to a free black in Table Valley was made out to Anthonij van Japan by Commander Zacharias Wagenaer on 28 September 1666.[136] This was followed by the grant of an *erf* to the recently manumitted Angela van Bengale in 1667.[137] This case is particularly remarkable owing to Angela's status as a free black woman in the patriarchal and status-conscious society of the seventeenth century Cape.

Nevertheless, the distinction of first free black farmer in the Dutch Cape Colony must be credited to Evert van Guinee. Despite arriving at the Cape as an enslaved person aboard the *Hasselt* on 6 May 1658,[138] Evert managed to secure his freedom and by 1669 was cultivating a piece of *tuinland* 723 square rods (*roede*) in size. Evert soon became one of the most successful free black farmers in Table Valley. Hattingh notes that on 10 November 1678, Evert bought his neighbour's plot of 442 square rods for 250 guilders. Evert evidently passed his business acumen on to his daughter, Maria Evertz, for by the time of her death in 1734 she not only still possessed the properties that had once belonged to her father, but had managed to acquire an additional sixty *morgen* of land in Camps Bay. A final Table Valley free black farmer worth mentioning, and one who would also make an appearance in Stellenbosch, was Louis van Bengale. Louis obtained his freedom in 1672 for fifty rixdollars, and in 1675 he was granted a piece of *tuinland*. He added to this in the following year by obtaining an *erf* in Bergstraat.[139]

[134] Malan, "The Cultural Landscape," 5.
[135] Nigel Worden, Elizabeth van Heyningen and Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town. The Making of a City: An Illustrated Social History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998), 41.
[136] Hattingh, "Kaapse Notariële Stukke Waarin Slawe van Vryburghers en Amptenare Vermeld Word," 52.
[137] J.L. Hattingh. "Grondbesit in die Tafelvallei. Deel 1: Die Eksperiment: Vryswartes as Grondeienaars, 1652-1710," *Kronos*, vol.10 (1985): 34-38.
[138] Böeseken, *Slaves and Free Blacks at the Cape*, 10-12.
[139] Hattingh, *Die Eerste Vryswartes van Stellenbosch*, 21.

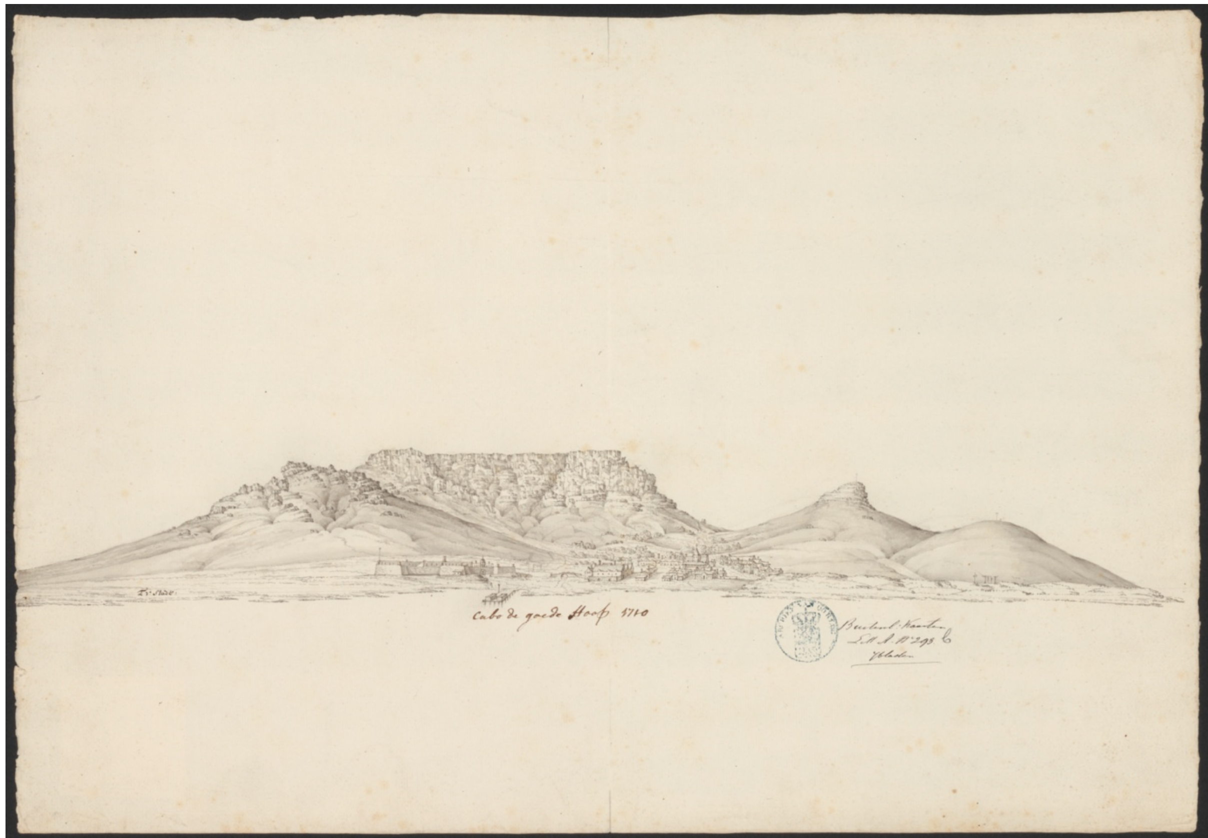

Figure 2: E.V. Stade. *Cabo de Goede Hoop, 1710 (Cape of Good Hope, 1710)*. [Graphite on paper]. 1710. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag.

Whilst the presence of a once nonautonomous class of agriculturalists during the early colonial period is something of an anomaly in South African history, it forms part of a broader paradigm that existed throughout the Dutch mercantile empire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Jean Taylor indicates that, apart from being traders and shopkeepers, the *mardijkers* of Batavia also cultivated sugarcane on small plots outside the city.[140] This predisposition towards agriculture on the part of the *mardijkers* is augmented by Bosma and Raben, who suggest that they often supplemented their income by selling produce grown in gardens attached to their properties.[141] Concurrently, some free blacks in seventeenth century Suriname, such as the aforementioned Thomas Herman, owned land and used it to improve their economic position in the colony.[142]

[140] Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*, 48.
[141] Bosma and Remco Raben, *Being "Dutch" in the Indies*, 51.
[142] Van der Linde, *Surinaamse Suikerheren en Hun Kerk,* 97.

Indeed, the circumstances of free blacks at the Cape and in Suriname were remarkably similar. Apart from being permitted to own land, most free blacks in Suriname, like their counterparts in the Cape, were once enslaved and therefore constituted a minority within colonial society. Moreover, many free black men in Suriname worked as builders and carpenters, while free burghers often employed free black women as domestic servants, nannies, cooks, and washerwomen.[143] Notwithstanding, the most significant parallel between free blacks in Suriname and those at the Cape was that the vast majority of both groups lived in poverty – owing to their previous unfree status. The corollary of this in Suriname was the intensification of competition in the labour sector and the proliferation of less reputable occupations, such as prostitution.[144] Conversely, free blacks at the Cape were ostensibly reprieved from this fate with the arrival of Simon van der Stel, and the inauguration of a new agricultural frontier in the colony of Stellenbosch.

'*Zoon van Eene Zwarte Heidensche Slavin*'[145]: Simon van der Stel at the Cape, 1679-1699

Of all the Cape's administrators during the Dutch period of occupation, Simon van der Stel best encapsulates the spirit of the age. Born at sea to a Dutch father and a Eurasian[146] mother, Van der Stel managed to secure the prestigious position of Commander (and later Governor) of the Dutch Cape Colony. In her comprehensive biographical account of Van der Stel, Böeseken states that Simon van der Stel's father, Adriaen van der Stel, was born to burgher parents in Dordrecht in 1605. At eighteen, he joined the VOC as a junior assistant and departed for Batavia aboard *De Star* in 1623, where he would eventually become a free burgher.[147] The register of the Dutch Reformed Church in Batavia records that Adriaen van der Stel married Maria Lievens on 24 March 1639. There is some uncertainty as to the origins of the bride. Nevertheless, most historians concur that her mother was Monica da Costa – a member of Batavia's *mardijker* community.[148] This kind of mixed marriage was certainly not atypical in Batavia or the early Cape. However, its influence on the experiences and later policies of Simon van der Stel should not be underestimated.

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[143] Hoefte, "Free Blacks and Coloureds in Plantation Suriname," 115-116.
[144] H. Hoetink, "Surinam and Curaçao," in *Neither Slave Nor Free: The Freedman of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World*, ed. David W. Cohen and Jack P. Greene (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 62-63.
[145] "Son of a Black, Pagan Slave." Peter Kolb's description of Simon van der Stel in *Naaukeurige en Uitvoerige Beschryving van De Kaap De Goede Hoop* (Amsterdam: Balthazar Lakeman, 1727), 181.
[146] A person of mixed European and Asian ancestry.
[147] A.J. Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, (Cape Town: Nasou Beperk, 1964), 3.
[148] Schoeman, *Here & Boere*, 7-11.

Shortly after his marriage Adriaen van der Stel left Batavia with his wife to take up his new post as the Commander of Mauritius. The couple's eldest child, Simon, was born at sea on 14 October 1639.[149] Simon van der Stel's early life was marred by personal tragedies; in 1646 his father was killed in an altercation with the Sinhalese of Ceylon, and his mother died in 1651 shortly after the family had returned to Batavia – leaving the orphaned Simon and his sister in the care of their grandmother, Monica da Costa. Monica's influence on Simon van der Stel's formative years is impossible to determine with any certainty. However, he would doubtless have been exposed to Batavia's *mardijker* community. In 1659, the twenty-year-old Van der Stel, like the sons of numerous Company officials before him, left Batavia to further his education and career in the Netherlands. Crucially, Van der Stel spent several weeks at the Cape en route to the Netherlands.[150] The settlement was still embryonic when he arrived in March 1660, with the most impressive building being Van Riebeeck's earthen fort, around which ninety-six Europeans clustered in rudimentary dwellings.[151] Despite these sober conditions, Böeseken conjures up a romantic image in which Van der Stel becomes infatuated with the Cape, destined to return as its ruler. It is far more plausible that he was underwhelmed by what he saw, or identified the Cape as a possible means of ascending the VOC's bureaucratic ladder. Indeed, an analysis of Simon van der Stel's life reveals a certain pragmatism, and a concern with self-advancement typical of VOC employees.

This is partially evidenced by Van der Stel's marriage on 23 October 1663 to Johanna Jacoba Six, the daughter of Willem Six and Cathalina Hinlopen. Johanna not only bore Simon six children but, more imperatively, inducted him into the influential network of the families Six, Hinlopen, and Oetgens van Waveren – all members of the Dutch *regenten* class. Böeseken asserts that it was his affiliation with these families, and his father's distinguished career in the VOC, that culminated in Van der Stel's appointment as the new Commander of the Cape by the Lords Seventeen in 1679.[152] Both Böeseken and Schoeman suggest that the marriage between Simon and Johanna was motivated by expedience rather than affection and cite Johanna's decision to remain in the Netherlands in support of this claim. Notwithstanding, Simon van der Stel, accompanied by all his children and his sister-in-law, sailed for the Cape aboard the *Vrije Zee* on 21 May 1679.[153]

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[149] Schoeman, *Here & Boere*, 11.
[150] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 8-13.
[151] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1660-1700*, VC 39, vol.1, 1660, 5-8.
[152] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 17-19.
[153] Schoeman, *Here & Boere*, 28.

Figure 3: Anonymous. *De 4 Burgemeesters van Amsterdam. Bas, Corver, Witsen en Hinlopen (The 4 Burgomasters of Amsterdam. Bas, Corver, Witsen and Hinlopen)*. [Pen on paper]. 1704. Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

The most immediate obstacle that confronted Van der Stel on his arrival at the Cape was the chronic and persistent food shortage. Despite a total grain yield of fifty "loads" (*lasten or scheepslasent*) for the year 1679, Van der Stel estimated that the colony required a minimum of eighty-four loads to be self-sufficient. Consequently, Van der Stel embarked on an ambitious agricultural reform scheme.[154] Under Van Riebeeck, the farming model implemented at the Cape had mirrored that of the Netherlands; early farms were less than twelve hectares each and were primarily utilised to cultivate wheat. Van der Stel abolished this system, placing no legal limit on the size of new farms provided the land was cultivated within three years.

[154] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 83.

Moreover, Van der Stel adopted a practical, if unpopular, approach towards farmers who were indebted to the VOC. Instead of lending oxen to the free burghers, as had been the practise, Van der Stel proposed that the Company sell the oxen to the burghers at twenty-four guilders. According to Böeseken this not only lessened the financial burden on the Company, but also eliminated less productive farmers.[155] Van der Stel is also credited by contemporaries, such as François Valentyn, with pioneering viniculture at the Cape. In his account of the colony, Valentyn remarked that "one of the noblest fruits here is the grape…for which the principal praise and honour is without doubt due to the old Heer [Simon] van der Stel," and that Van der Stel was one of the "chief promoters, both of agriculture and of vine growing."[156] It is unsurprising, then, that the first significant expansion of the Cape's agricultural zone coincided with Simon van der Stel's administration.

Three weeks after his arrival, Van der Stel embarked on a general inspection of the colony. One of the objectives of this expedition was to determine whether the south-eastern wind, which wreaked havoc in Table Valley, was also present in the newly declared district of Hottentots Holland. Despite having this fear confirmed, Van der Stel serendipitously ventured through a previously uncharted region on his way back to the Castle. In his journal (*daghregister*) entry of 8 November 1679, the Commander's enthusiasm for the area's potential is palpable:

> It consists of a level valley with several thousand morgen of beautiful pasturage, also very suitable for agriculture. Through the valley flows a very impressive fresh-water river with its banks fringed by beautiful tall trees and these trees are very suitable both for timber and fuel. In the river a small island was discovered around which the water streams and which is densely overgrown with beautiful high trees.[157]

Van der Stel named this new colony Stellenbosch and, once he had returned to the Castle, declared that any free person could apply for land there. During the first year they could occupy and work the land free of tax, but thereafter they were expected to give one tenth of their annual harvest to the Company. This proved to be a compelling incentive, for eight families are recorded as having settled in the area by 1680. Three years later this number had increased to forty, with the grain harvest for that year amounting to 3,021 muds (*muids*) of wheat.[158]

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[155] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 83-84.
[156] François Valentyn, *Descriptions of the Cape of Good Hope with the matters concerning it*, eds. P. Serton, R. Raven-Hart and J. de Kock (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1971), 115.
[157] Smuts, *Stellenbosch Three Centuries,* 52.
[158] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 55.

Wheat production notwithstanding, most farms in the new colony were mixed and included grain, wine, and livestock. Labour on these farms was seasonal and intensive. In the case of grain, preparation normally began in April with ploughing and manuring, followed by harvesting and threshing from December to March. On mixed farms, the conclusion of the grain harvest coincided with the beginning of grape-picking.[159] During the initial phase of settlement, most of the labour demands on Stellenbosch farms were either met by the farmers themselves, Khoekhoe servants, enslaved people, and European *knechts*.[160] As already mentioned in the introduction and first chapter, the establishment of a new agricultural zone in Stellenbosch coincided with what Guelke and Shell have termed a "golden period" for small-scale farmers, with new settlers being granted "as much land of their own choosing as they were able to cultivate within three years."[161] These generous terms allowed free blacks and poor whites (i.e., *kneghts* and tenants) to experiment with farming. Yet only one of these groups would achieve lasting success.

Within the first few years of farms being allocated, boundary disputes and the maintenance of public roads necessitated the creation of a local government in Stellenbosch. On 31 August 1682 the Council of Policy appointed four prominent Stellenbosch farmers as 'councillors' (*heemraden*) for the new colony. According to Biewenga, the Stellenbosch *heemraad* was modelled on that of the Batavian hinterland (*ommelanden*) and was under the jurisdiction of the Council of Policy in Cape Town. In 1685 Commissioner Hendrik Adriaan van Reede (1636-1691) appointed a local magistrate (*landdrost*) as the head of the *heemraad*, and decreed that a town should be developed to service the commercial and spiritual needs of the surrounding farmers.[162] This included the construction of a *drostdy*, which would function as the courthouse and residence for the magistrate, as well as a church and houses for clergymen, the schoolmaster, and the smith.[163] Simon van der Stel took a keen interest in the development of the town and district that bore his name. For example, in 1686 he instituted an annual fair (*kermis*) that coincided with his birthday celebrations.[164] Moreover, in 1687 Van der Stel expressed his displeasure at the slow pace of construction by severely reprimanding the magistrate and meting out punishments to the workers.[165]

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[159] Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 20-22.
[160] Ad Biewenga, *De Kaap de Goede Hoop,* 92-105.
[161] Guelke and Shell, "An Early Colonial Gentry," 271.
[162] Biewenga, *De Kaap de Goede Hoop*, 38-40.
[163] Hermann Giliomee, *Always Been Here: The Story of a Stellenbosch Community* (Cape Town: Africana Publishers, 2018), 16.
[164] Schoeman, *Here & Boere*, 302-303.
[165] Smuts, *Stellenbosch Three Centuries*, 63.

Van der Stel's keen interest in the development of Stellenbosch can be read in several different ways. One possibility is that his overzealousness was characteristic of new VOC officials attempting to prove their value to the Company. Conversely, his decision to name the colony after himself and establish a fair to commemorate his birthday, as well as his harsh treatment of the construction workers, is redolent of a feudal lord (*heer*) in the Netherlands, or a Dutch patroon in New Netherland. The system of patroonship was unique to the Dutch Atlantic. Yet, no historian has, to date, explored the parallels between this system and other forms of Dutch colonial landownership – specifically in the Indian Ocean. Patroonship in New Netherland was, in effect, a compromise between different factions within the Amsterdam Chamber of the GWC and circumscribed by a set of 'Freedoms and Exemptions' (*Vryheden ende Exemptien*) enacted on 7 June 1629. The paramount objective of the patroonship system was to promote colonisation. Thus, patroons were members of the GWC who were "prepared to declare that they would, within four years, establish a colony of at least fifty people of above fifteen years of age." The territory of a patroonship was permitted to extend over six kilometres along the coast or a river, and as far inland "as the situation of the occupants will permit." Central to the patroonship was the manor. In this instance, 'manor' does not simply signify a country house, but also refers to the manorial rights (*heerlijke rechten*) of the patroon, i.e., his juridical and administrative privileges over certain parts of New Netherland, subject to the GWC.[166]

Simon van der Stel acquired his own manor, named Constantia, from Commissioner Van Reede on 31 July 1685. The estate initially measured between 800 and 1,000 *morgen*. However, by the end of his life Van der Stel owned nearly all the land east of Constantia and Zeekoevlei.[167] Sequestered amongst the vineyards of his estate, Van der Stel built what Valentyn describes as a "very fine house" where the visitor, after ascending a few steps, "enters a large and lovely front hall, paved very neatly with white marble."[168] Prior to Van der Stel's arrival, Company policy towards landownership by its officials, specifically at the Cape, had been mercurial. For example, between 1652-1668 the colony's first three commanders[169] all owned substantial farms. Yet, by the time Jacob Borghorst succeeded Van Quaelberg as the fourth commander of the Cape in 1668, VOC officials were prohibited from owning land.[170]

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[166] Jaap Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 112.
[167] Adam Tas, *The Diary of Adam Tas, 1705-1706*, ed. Leo Fouché (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1970), 343.
[168] Valentyn, *Descriptions of the Cape of Good Hope*, 194-195.
[169] They were: (1) Johan Anthoniszoon van Riebeeck (1652-1662); (2) Zacharias Wagenaer (1662-1666); (3) Cornelis van Quaelberg (1666-1668).
[170] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 160-162.

Simon van der Stel, with the support of Commissioner Rijckloff van Goens Jr. (1642-1687), successfully managed to circumvent VOC policy soon after his arrival at the Cape. Apart from Constantia, farms were also granted to members of the Council of Policy and other Company officials – such as Captain Jeronimus Cruse and Lieutenant Olof Berg.[171] A perusal of the Resolutions of the Council of Policy for 13 December 1684 reveals the ostensible rationale behind this decision. As the Company officials had more capital at their disposal than the free burghers, giving them land would enable them to become successful farmers in their own right. This, in turn, would place them in a favourable position to assist the free burghers.[172]

Figure 4: E.V. Stade. *Constantia, de Hofstede van dien Heer Simon van der Stell, 1710 (Constantia, the Homestead of the Lord Simon van der Stell)*. [Graphite on paper]. 1710. Nationaal Archief, Den Haag.

Nonetheless, the letters between Simon van der Stel and his eldest son, Willem Adriaan, convey a very different attitude on the part of the former towards the free burghers; one that subverts the sincerity recorded in the Council of Policy minutes. Simon van der Stel describes how many of the free burghers were addicted to alcohol and, not content with exhausting the farms already granted to them, constantly plagued the Company with new request for additional land to the extent that "the whole Africa would not be able to satisfy these people."[173]

[171] Tas, *The Diary of Adam Tas*, 345.
[172] WCARS, *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of the Cape of Good Hope*, C.17, 19-39.
[173] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 96.

Cognisant of this sentiment towards the free burghers, and his personal ambition, it is not unreasonable to theorise that Simon van der Stel would contrive to supplant the free burghers with a more compliant and governable class of small-scale agriculturalists. After all, Jan van Riebeeck had attempted to procure Chinese labourers and farmers for the Cape from Batavia as early as 1652. It was only after his request was declined that Van Riebeeck reluctantly released employees from Company service in 1657 to become farmers. Van der Stel opted for a different approach: writing to the Lords Seventeen in March 1681, he proposed an experiment in which several enslaved people would be freed and settled as independent farmers in the new colony of Stellenbosch. The compliance of these enslaved individuals notwithstanding, it is possible to infer that Van der Stel's decision would have been influenced by his experience of slavery in Indonesia and his exposure to the *mardijker* community. In his proposal to the Lords Seventeen, Van der Stel emphasised that preference should be given to enslaved Africans, as they were, in his opinion, best suited to undertake hard work.[174] In a dispatch written on 8 June 1682, the Company directors officially approved Van der Stel's experiment, stating that "if you are of the opinion that they [enslaved people] would be more zealous if made free, you may make the experiment with one or two families."[175]

***Angola*, *Leef-op-Hoop*, and *Jan Lui*: Three Free Black Farms in Jonkershoek, 1683-1712**

The site of Van der Stel's experiment was to be Jan de Jonkers Hoek (later Jonkershoek), southeast of Stellenbosch village. During the 1680s this valley, ensconced between Stellenbosch Mountain and the Hottentot Hollands Mountains, had lush meadows and plenty of timber. However, the most enticing feature of Jonkershoek was the Eerste River, which bisected the valley and provided ample irrigation.[176] Consequently, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, Jonkershoek had been transformed into a patchwork of farms populated by free burghers and free blacks alike.

[174] Schoeman, *Early Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1717*, 328.
[175] Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, 145.
[176] Smuts, *Stellenbosch Three Centuries*, 28-48.

Anthony, Manuel and Lijsbeth van Angola

Although they only received their official land grant on 15 October 1692, Anthony van Angola[177] and Manuel van Angola had been in de facto possession of a farm in Jonkershoek since 1683 – making theirs the first recorded free black farm in Stellenbosch. The farm, named Angola, measured fifty-seven *morgen* and 573 square rods. Besides being co-owners, Anthony and Manuel were also business partners, being described as "freed slaves and associates or companions" ("*vrijgelaten slaven en consoorten of makkers*").[178] As Anthony and Manuel were both formerly enslaved, their exact origin remains opaque. Anna Böeseken and Johan Hattingh postulate that they were likely among the first group of enslaved people who arrived at the Cape from Angola onboard the *Amersfoort* on 28 March 1658. In the case of Anthony, this is supported by a document describing a "slave named Anthony" ("*lijfeigene genampt Anthonij*") who was sold by Nathaniel West to Christiaan Jansz van Hoesum on 5 December 1658.[179] Anthony must therefore have obtained his freedom between 1658 and 1683 – when he and Manuel began farming in Jonkershoek.

Figure 5: Diagram indicating land granted to Anthony and Manuel van Angola. WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, vol.16, 70-71.

[177] Variously referred to as: Anthonij/Antoni van Angola, De Swarte Anthoni and Antoni de Kaffer.
[178] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, vol.16, 70-71.
[179] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, vol.1, 116.

The first reference to Manuel van Angola is a letter of manumission in which he and his domestic partner,[180] Elisabeth (or Lijsbeth) van Angola, were freed by Hester van Lier on 16 April 1681.[181] It is unclear whether Anthony and Manuel farmed together ab initio. However, Manuel and Lijsbeth's appearance on the muster roll of free individuals in 1682, three years before Anthony is first listed, suggests that theirs may have preceded Anthony's arrival in Stellenbosch.[182] By 1686, the muster roll records Manuel, Lijsbeth and their daughter Marij (or Mari) being in the "company" of Anthony van Angola and his domestic partner, Lijsbeth van de Caap. The profitability of Anthony and Manuel's farming venture can be extrapolated from the tax records (*opgaafrolle*) for 1683-1686, with 1686 being the last year in which Manuel appears in the annual census.[183] For instance, on 31 July 1684 Anthony and Manuel could afford to purchase an enslaved person named Sijmen Ham van Madagascar from Olof Berg for eighty-five rixdollars.[184] Furthermore, in 1685 their combined assets constituted thirteen head of cattle, 100 sheep, sixty muds of wheat, and five muds of barley. Notably, it was only after Manuel van Angola's disappearance from the historical record that Anthony van Angola's farming activities truly prospered. The *opgaafrol* of 1688 indicates that Anthony, now farming in partnership with Manuel's widow, owned two enslaved people, two horses, eighteen head of cattle, 196 sheep, 600 vines, twenty-five muds of wheat, and two muds of barely. These statistics compare favourably with those of Anthony's free burgher neighbour, Jan Andriesze, who, though he produced ten more muds of wheat than Anthony, had no vines to speak of.[185] Moreover, during this period Anthony managed to expand his farm from the original fifty-seven morgen to sixty morgen,[186] and employed at least two European *knechts* as farm labourers.[187]

[180] Marriage between enslaved people was prohibited by the VOC. Nevertheless, many enslaved couples at the Cape were described as living together as "husband and wife". Manuel and Elisabeth are listed together in subsequent census records, possibly signifying a domestic partnership.

[181] WCARS, *Transporten en Schepenenkennisse,* 16 April 1681.

[182] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1660-1700*, VC 39, vol.1, 1682, 67.

[183] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1660-1700*, VC 39, vol.1, 1686, 74-75.

[184] WCARS, *Transporten en Schepenenkennisse,* 1684, 31 July 1684.

[185] Hattingh, *Die Eerste Vryswartes van Stellenbosch*, 16.

[186] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch (1683-1981): Diverse Notarial Deeds, 1683-1852*, vol.18/144, 20 April 1694.

[187] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch (1683-1981): Civil Cases, 1686-1965*, vol.5/1, 15-16 March 1688.

However, with the death of Lijsbeth van Angola on 20 April 1694, Anthony's luck began to turn. In May of the same year Manuel and Lijsbeth's daughter, Marij, demanded six oxen, fifty sheep and an enslaved man named Floris as part of her inheritance.[188] This loss of stock, coupled with his advanced age, significantly curtailed Anthony's ability to continue farming. Furthermore, Anthony's health also began to deteriorate during the late 1680s – as evidenced by the fact that on 13 November 1688 the surgeon Jean du Plessis sued Anthony for an outstanding amount of fifteen rixdollars.[189] Consequently, by the time of his own death in September 1696, Anthony's estate was much reduced but still solvent. An inventory of this estate, compiled on 26 September 1696, describes "a farm situated at Stellenbosch in Jan Jonkers Hoek, fifty-seven morgen in size; thereon a small clay house." ("*Een plaats leggende aan Stellenbosch in Jan Jonkers Hoek, groot ruijm 57 morgen; daarop een kleijn kleijen huijsjen*"). A subsequent auction of Anthony's estate on 15 December 1696 listed, inter alia, the sale of "a piece of land, that the deceased free black Anthony van Angola bought during his lifetime, from the fellow free black Louis van Bengal." ("*het stuk land, dat de overleëden vrije swart Anthonij van Angola bij sijn leven gekogt heeft, van de meede vrije swart Louis van Bengale"*).[190] Presumably this was the three *morgen* of land Anthony added to his holdings between his initial grant of 1692, and the death of his business partner Lijsbeth van Angola in 1694. More imperatively, the reference to Louis van Bengal alludes to the existence of a socio-economic network between free blacks in Jonkershoek.

[188] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch (1683-1981): Contracts, 1689-1701,* vol.18/40, 17 May 1694.
[189] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch (1683-1981): Civil Cases, 1686-1965*, vol.5/1, 13 November 1688.
[190] WCARS, *Inventories of the Orphan Chamber*, MOOC10/1.8, 15 December 1696.

Figure 6: Cloth map of farms along the Eerste River in Jonkershoek. The two parcels of land owned by Anthony van Angola are labelled “Anthony the Kaffer” (*Antony de Kaffer*) and “The Black Anthony” (*D’Swarte Anthoni)*. WCARS, *Maps,* M1/273, c.1690s.

Louis van Bengal

In his critical intervention on Stellenbosch’s free black population, Hattingh conveys an impression of Louis van Bengal as a struggling, and ultimately unsuccessful, farmer of little significance[191] – a harsh and unjustified critique, especially as the trajectory of Louis van Bengal’s life exemplifies the limitations experienced by a free black individual at the Cape during the late seventeenth century. The earliest reference to Louis van Bengal dates to 25 September 1666, when Commander Zacharias Wagenaer sold him to Secunde Hendrik Lacus for eighty rixdollars.[192]

[191] Hattingh, *Die Eerste Vryswartes van Stellenbosch*, 29-30.
[192] WCARS, *Transporten en Schepenenkennisse,* 1663-1666, 25 September 1666, 111-112.

Following Lacus' dismissal on corruption charges in 1671, the visiting Commissioner Isbrand Goske granted Louis permission to purchase his freedom for fifty reals. However, it was only in the subsequent year that Louis, "now more or less having achieved prosperity," ("*nu min off meer tot prospeiriteit geraackt*") approached the Council of Policy with the necessary sum.[193] This event is illuminating for two reasons. First, it distinguishes Louis as part of the Cape's early free black population. Second, it indicates that Louis was one of the few enslaved people who accumulated enough capital to buy their freedom.

Louis' first decade as a free black in Cape Town has left a few scattered, though informative, traces. His name appears as "Louis, free black" ("*Louis, vryezwart*") in the muster roll of 1673,[194] and from 1674 onwards as "Louis van Bengale."[195] More imperative is his baptism into the Dutch Reformed Church on 5 May 1675.[196] The baptism of an adult, free black at the Cape was not unprecedented. However, baptisms of this kind were more characteristic of the eighteenth century, and predominantly involved free black women rather than men – making Louis an outlier. His baptism notwithstanding, Louis either did not apply for, or was not granted, a loan by the Church to address the financial difficulties he experienced in the early 1680s. These included a fine for illegally chopping wood in 1680,[197] and an outstanding debt of sixty-two rixdollars owed to Andries Houwer dated 16 May 1683.[198] Cognisant of the opportunities available in Stellenbosch through his interactions with free burghers and other free blacks, Louis doubtlessly looked to the fertile Jonkershoek as the panacea for his financial woes.

[193] WCARS, *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of the Cape of Good Hope,* C.8, 13 April 1672, 2.
[194] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1660-1700*, VC 39, vol.1, 1673, 45.
[195] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1660-1700*, VC 39, vol.1, 1674, 52.
[196] WCARS, *Dutch Reformed Church Registers, Cape Town: Baptisms, Memberships, Marriage, 1665-1695*, VC 603, 5 May 1675.
[197] WCARS, *Court of Justice: Original Rolls and Minutes, Criminal and Civil, 1678-1688*, CJ.2, 23 September 1680, 117.
[198] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch (1683-1981): Diverse Notarial Deeds, 1683-1852*, vol.18/144, 16 May 1683.

According to the official grant of 15 October 1692, Louis had already been farming on a piece of land twenty-nine *morgen* and 214 square rods in size, bordering the land of Anthony van Angola, since 1684.[199] Hattingh maintains that this farm could not have been named Leef-op-Hoop ("Live on Hope") as Böeseken suggest, as Louis' land grant was situated higher up in the Jonkershoek Valley. At any rate, Leef-op-Hoop remains closely associated with Louis and is arguably the most appropriate name for a farm owned by a formerly enslaved person. Initially, this sense of optimism seems to have permeated Louis' farming activities, so that in the *opgaafrol* of 1685 his assets were listed as one enslaved woman, two enslaved boys, one horse, ten head of cattle, twenty-two muds of wheat, and five muds of barley.[200] Furthermore, like his neighbour Anthony van Angola, Louis employed at least one European *knect* on his farm.[201]

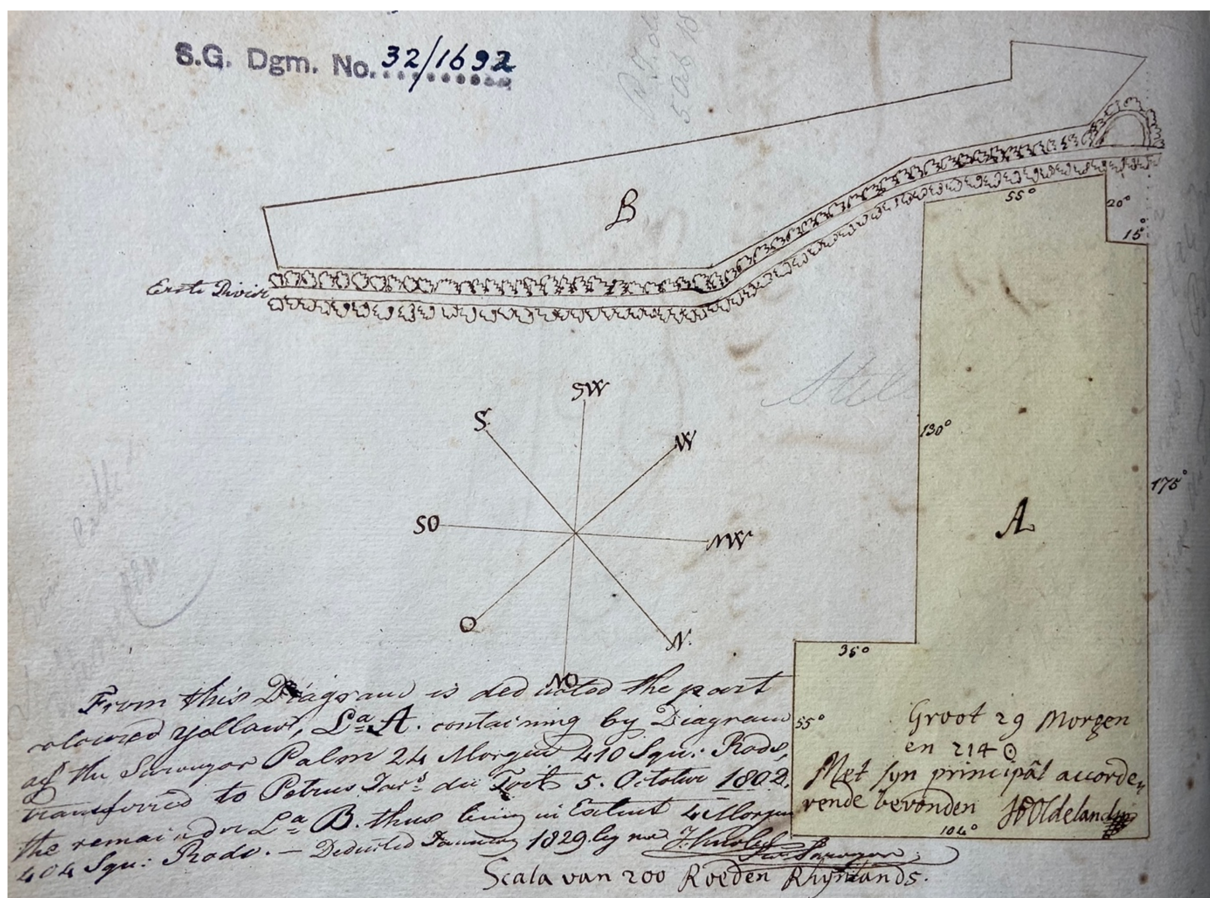

Figure 7: Diagram indicating land granted to Louis van Bengal. Louis' farm can be seen bordering the Eerste River to the southwest and is shaded in yellow.

[199] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, vol.16, 1684, 72-73.
[200] Hattingh, *Die Eerste Vryswartes van Stellenbosch*, 26-28.
[201] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch (1683-1981): Civil Cases, 1686-1965*, vol.5/1, 11 June 1688.

Nevertheless, in 1690 Louis van Bengal gave up farming altogether and decamped to Cape Town.[202] The circumstances which induced this decision are obscure. Hattingh postulates that Louis' tempestuous personal life may have been the catalyst, citing his marital difficulties with Lijsbeth van Cabo. In a "Memo of damages" ("*Memo van schade*"), Louis accused his former *knecht* Willem Teerling of eloping with Lijsbeth, thereby depriving him of an essential labour source and causing extensive damage on his farm – Louis had evidently dispensed with any affections towards Lijsbeth by this point. The damage, which included the loss of twenty-five sheep and two *morgen* of wheat, prompted the Council of Justice to fine Willem 450 guilders and an additional twenty-five rixdollars for seducing Lijsbeth.[203] If Hattingh's theory is correct, Louis' circumstances must have been desperate – the penalty fee for moving from Stellenbosch or Drakenstein to the Cape was fifty rixdollars.[204]

Once back in Cape Town, Louis' life became more settled. In the muster roll of 1695, he is listed alongside Rebecca van Macassar, with two children. Hattingh notes that Rebecca had already been confirmed as a member of the Dutch Reformed Church in Batavia when she arrived at the Cape in 1693, and that it was likely through her influence that Louis made his confession of faith in the Cape Church on 15 April 1697.[205] Notwithstanding, over the next decade Louis' finances were constantly in flux. For example, in the estate inventory of Christina Does, compiled on 13 August 1703, Louis is listed as owing 900 rixdollars to the estate.[206] This did not prevent Louis from purchasing six ebony chairs for sixteen rixdollars when Christina's possessions were auctioned on 8 October 1703.[207] Similarly, despite having his possessions (including the six ebony chairs) sold at auction to satisfy his debts on 19 January 1705,[208] Louis still managed to buy four paintings from the estate of Gerrit Hendrik Meyer in September of the same year.[209]

[202] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch (1683-1981): Attestations of Consent, 1688-1837*, vol.15/2, July 1690.
[203] WCARS, *Court of Justice: Original Rolls and Minutes, Criminal and Civil, 1689-1700,* CJ.3, 16 July 1689.
[204] Biewenga, *De Kaap de Goede Hoop*, 44.
[205] Hattingh, *Die Eerste Vryswartes van Stellenbosch*, 22.
[206] WCARS, *Inventories of the Orphan Chamber*, MOOC8/1.74, 13 August 1703, 10.
[207] WCARS, *Inventories of the Orphan Chamber*, MOOC10/1.27, 8 October 1703, 7.
[208] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Court of Justice of the Cape Colony, 1652-1843: Miscellaneous Inventories and Vendue Rolls, 1688-1795*, CJ.2914, 19 January 1705, 116-123.
[209] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Court of Justice of the Cape Colony, 1652-1843: Miscellaneous Inventories and Vendue Rolls, 1688-1795*, CJ.2914, September 1705.

This erratic paradigm of luxury purchases and spiralling debt is indicative of an attempt to achieve a higher socio-economic status – if only superficially. Having bought himself free from slavery and becoming a propertied member of the Dutch Reformed Church, it is evident that Louis was attempting to emulate his more affluent free burgher counterparts. The narrative of Louis van Bengal should not be interpreted as either a tragedy or failure, as Hattingh suggests, but rather as a remarkable example of ambition and resilience. Moreover, it illustrates the pliability of Cape society during the first few decades of Dutch rule, where factors such as race and class did not necessarily preclude the possibility of social advancement.

Jan van Ceylon and Marquart van Ceylon

Bordering Louis van Bengal's farm to the northwest was yet another consortium of free black farmers, namely Jan van Ceylon and Marquart van Ceylon.[210] Indeed, there are several parallels between Jan and Marquart van Ceylon, and Anthony and Manuel van Angola. Like Anthony and Manuel, Jan and Marquart are described as "freed slaves and companions" ("*vrijgelaten slaven en makkers*") in their official land grant of 15 October 1692.[211] Moreover, from the minutes of the Council of Policy, it appears that Jan and Marquart arrived at the Cape together as enslaved people on the ship *Marseveen* on 23 December 1661.[212] Finally, based on the muster rolls, it is clear that Marquart was the first to establish himself in Stellenbosch and was only followed by Jan three years later.[213] However, the partnership between Jan and Marquart, which began in 1685, was tenuous. On 6 September 1686, Jan and Marquart approached the Stellenbosch *heemraad* to settle a legal dispute concerning the ownership of the farm. The first Landdrost of Stellenbosch, Johannes Mulder, ruled that the farm and annual harvest were to be divided equally between the plaintiffs, with Jan having to compensate Marquart with an additional six muds of wheat.[214] That the issue remained unresolved is exemplified by Marquart's subsequent appeal to the *heemraad*, wherein he claimed that the six muds of wheat remained outstanding. It was only after the intervention of the *heemraad* members Jan Mostert and Gerhard van der Bijl, that the case was settled on 16 March 1688.[215]

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[210] In the annual *opgaafrollen* and *monsterrollen*, Jan van Ceylon is interchangeably referred to as Jan Luij, whereas Marquart van Ceylon is sometimes indicated as Paij or Paay van Ceylon.
[211] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, vol.16, 15 October 1692, 66-67.
[212] WCARS, *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of the Cape of Good Hope,* 23 December 1661.
[213] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1660-1700*, VC 39, vol.1, 1682, 65.
[214] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch (1683-1981): Civil Cases, 1686-1965*, vol.5/1, 5 September 1686.
[215] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch (1683-1981): Civil Cases, 1686-1965*, vol.5/1, 16 March 1688.

Figure 8: Diagram indicating land granted to Jan and Marquart van Ceylon. WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, vol.16, 66-67.

Jan's failure to supply the six muds of wheat may have been pragmatic rather than an act of petty defiance; the census of 1685 reveals that he was in a domestic relationship with Dina van Malabar,[216] and that the couple had three children. Unlike Louis van Bengal and Lijsbeth van Cabo, the relationship between Jan and Dina seems to have been amicable. Following their marriage on 28 March 1688,[217] the couple remained together until Dina's presumed death in 1713.[218] Despite Marquart van Ceylon's disappearance from the muster rolls after 1691,[219] Jan and Dina managed to distinguish themselves as successful farmers. In the *opgaafrol* of 1692 their combined assets included 2,000 vines, ten muds of wheat, two muds of rye, two muds of barley, twenty-five sheep, six pigs, one horse, and four oxen.[220] Hattingh asserts that the pair maintained this prosperity until around 1700, after which they were increasingly necessitated to sell off livestock and supplement their income by hunting and transporting wood.[221] Nonetheless, these measures were ultimately insufficient, and on 29 September 1712, Jan van Ceylon's farm was sold to Anna Hoeks by order of the Council of Justice to settle his debts. Jan's fate after this remains unknown.

[216] She is variously listed as Diana van Malabar, Diana van Colang, Leena van Coijlang, and Dina Coijlang.
[217] WCARS, *Dutch Reformed Church Registers, Cape Town: Baptisms, Memberships, Marriage, 1665-1695* VC 603, 28 March 1688, 84.
[218] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1700-1720*, VC 49, vol.2, 272.
[219] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1660-1700*, VC 39, vol.1, 1691, 104-109.
[220] WCARS, *Inventaris van Opgaafrolle, 1692-1845*, J.183, 1692.
[221] Hattingh, *Die Eerste Vryswartes van Stellenbosch*, 36-37.

He was still alive on 4 September 1713 when Allardus Bartholomeus Koopman sued him for five rixdollars,[222] but is absent from the 1714 muster roll.[223] Therefore, Jan van Ceylon, one of the last free black farmers of Jonkershoek, must have passed away between 4 September 1713 and 31 December 1714.

The three case studies outlined above enable several observations. Firstly, the former enslaved status of free blacks did not constitute an inherent obstacle in their acquisition of farmland. Secondly, their farms either bordered, or were close to, one another. Crucially, the interactions between these free black farmers suggest that this was the result of a conscious decision and alludes to a sense of social cohesion. Thirdly, contrary to De Wet's cynical contention that "the free black community had a negligible impact on the development of the Cape settlement numerically, as well as culturally and economically",[224] the free black farmers of Jonkershoek experienced epochs of prosperity rivalling their free burgher neighbours. Fourthly, none of the first-generation free black farmers were able to sustain this prosperity beyond 1720. This final point prompts numerous questions, the foremost being: Why did white free burghers become the dominant agrarian class in Jonkershoek and not free blacks?

Historians have advanced multiple heterogeneous responses to this question over the last fifty years. Hattingh underscores the centrality of high labour costs, the distance from the market and the specialised nature of wheat farming.[225] Conversely, Giliomee considers the free blacks' lack of access to capital to have been the primary catalyst responsible for their decline.[226] Yet, as Guelke and Shell point out, many of these obstacles also confronted the free burghers. Rather, the distinguishing feature between these two groups is their relationship with the Van der Stel dynast. In the case of the free blacks, this relationship, which began with Simon van der Stel's free black 'experiment', intensified during the rule of his son and successor, Willem Adriaan. The fate of the free black farmers of Jonkershoek under Willem Adriaan van der Stel's governorship constitutes the nucleus of the next chapter. Specifically, whether free black support of Willem Adriaan in his protracted struggle with the free burghers invited reprisals from the latter – thereby precipitating the decline of Jonkershoek's free black population following Van der Stel's dismissal in 1707.

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[222] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Magistrate of Stellenbosch (1683-1981): Civil Cases, 1686-1965*, vol.5/8, 4 September 1713.
[223] WCARS, *Muster Rolls of Freemen at the Cape, 1700-1720*, VC 49, vol.2, 1714.
[224] De Wet, *Die Vryliede en Vryswartes in die Kaapse Nedersetting*, 216.
[225] Hattingh, "Grondbesit in die Tafelvallei. Deel 1," 41.
[226] Giliomee, *The Afrikaners,* 39.

Chapter Three:

The Decline of Jonkershoek's Free Black Farmers, 1679-1710

Simon van der Stel's governorship inaugurated unprecedented prosperity for free black farmers in the Dutch Cape Colony. Whilst there had never been any legal restrictions preventing free blacks from owning and farming land at the Cape, the patronage of Simon van der Stel significantly expedited the process of land acquisition – particularly in the Jonkershoek Valley of Stellenbosch. Notwithstanding, chapter two illustrated that Van der Stel was motivated by more than a sense of altruism towards members of the Cape's formerly unfree population. By supplanting the calcitrant free burgher farmers with a more compliant and loyal group, Van der Stel hoped to create a landowning class of VOC officials and free black farmers that could supply the colony with all it required – not dissimilar to the patroonship system in New Netherland. Chapter three explores the pursuit, and ultimate failure, of this policy by Simon van der Stel's son and successor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel. In particular, this chapter posits that the repercussions of the Van der Stels' ambitions were most acutely experienced by their free black supporters and contributed to the latter's decline as independent farmers.

Corruption and Nepotism: The Fall of the House of Van der Stel, 1679-1707

In popular imagination, the narrative of Willem Adriaan van der Stel's governorship, and subsequent banishment, adheres to the traditional 'good vs evil' trope: the corrupt and despotic governor overthrown by a righteous band of patriotic citizens. However, scrutiny of the available source material renders a more nuanced historical reality in which the motives of the free burghers, and Willem Adriaan van der Stel, are more morally ambiguous.

Wilhelmus Adrianus van der Stel was born in the Dutch city of Haarlem on 24 August 1664 to Simon van der Stel and Johanna Jacoba Six. As the eldest son, Willem Adriaan was ideally positioned to capitalise on the prosperity of the Dutch Golden Age. His grandfather, Adriaen van der Stel, had distinguished himself in the service of the VOC, and his mother was connected to the patrician Six, Hinlopen, and Oetgens van Waveren families. At fifteen, Willem Adriaan, accompanied by his father and five younger siblings, sailed for the Cape aboard the *Vrije Zee*.[227]

[227] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 17-30.

Following their arrival on 12 October 1679, Simon van der Stel wasted no time securing lucrative positions within the local administration for his three eldest sons. Despite his young age and inexperience, Willem Adriaan was appointed Secretary of the Orphan Chamber on 16 December 1680. Subsequently, he was promoted to bookkeeper for the Company on 19 April 1682 and treasurer on 26 December 1682. Meanwhile, Willem Adriaan's younger brothers, Adriaen and Frans, both gained employment as Company clerks – each earning twelve guilders per month.[228] Whilst these examples of nepotism may disquiet modern sensibilities, they were everyday praxis in the Dutch mercantile empire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As chapter two illustrated, members of the Van Aerssen family were able to obtain positions in both the GWC and VOC owing to the family's role in the creation of both companies. Similarly, the fourth director of the Dutch colony of New Netherland, Wouter van Twiller (1606-1654), was appointed to his position based on the recommendation of his maternal uncle, Kiliaen van Rensselaer (1586-1643) – the patroon of Rensselaerswyck.[229] It is possible to interpret Willem Adriaan's appointment to several influential posts as an attempt by Simon van der Stel to groom his son for an executive role in the Company, perhaps even the governorship of the Cape.

It was not unorthodox for positions of authority within the VOC to assume a quasi-hereditary quality. For example, Rijcklof Volckertsz van Goens (1619-1682), Governor of Dutch Ceylon, was succeeded by his son, Rijckloff van Goens Jr. Likewise, Willem van Outhoorn (1635-1720), Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, was followed by his son-in-law, Joan van Hoorn (1653-1711).[230] That this was the envisioned career trajectory for Willem Adriaan van der Stel is further corroborated by his departure to the Netherlands on 31 May 1684, and his marriage to Maria de Haze. Besides being successful silk merchants, Maria's family were closely affiliated with the directors of the VOC. Her father, François de Haze, was the chief executive officer (*opperhoofd*) on Deshima (1669-1670), in Persia (1671-1673) and Bengal (1673-1676).[231]

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[228] WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Secretary, Council of Policy, 1649-1795*. Resolutions, 1651-1796, vol. 14, 16 December 1680 193-195; WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Secretary, Council of Policy, 1649-1795.* Resolutions, 1651-1796, vol. 15, 19 April 1682, 106-108; WCARS, *Inventory of the Archives of the Secretary, Council of Policy, 1649-1795*. Resolutions, 1651-1796, vol. 16, 26 December 1682, 45-46.
[229] Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 63-64.
[230] Markus P.M. Vink, *Encounters on the Opposite Coast: The Dutch East India Company and the Nayaka State of Madurai in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 450-478.
[231] Omar Prakash Chouan, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985, 177-178.

Whilst in the Netherlands, Willem Adriaan was also granted the title ‘Lord in Old and New Vossemeer’ (*Heer in Oud en Nieuw Vossemeer*) and served as an alderman (*schepen*) of Amsterdam.[232] Nonetheless, the most important aspect of Van der Stel’s time in the Netherlands was the friendship that he cultivated with Nicolaes Witsen (1641-1717). The Witsen family, like the Van Aerssens, were involved in the GWC and the VOC, with Nicolaes Witsen being appointed as a VOC director in 1693.[233] Witsen undoubtedly influenced the appointment of Willem Adriaan van der Stel as the next governor of the Dutch Cape Colony on 31 July 1698.[234] Moreover, before departing for the Cape on 22 September 1698 with his wife and three children, Willem Adriaan transferred his power of attorney to Nicolaes Witsen.[235]

Figure 9: Pieter Schenk. *Nicolaes Witsen*. [Mezzotint]. 26,9 x 18,5 cm. 1701. Stadsarchief, Amsterdam.

[232] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 156.
[233] P.J.A.N. Rietbergen, “Witsen’s World: Nicolaes Witsen (1641-1717) between the Dutch East India Company and the Republic of Letters,” *Itineration* 9, no.2 (July 1985): 122.
[234] Schoeman, *Here & Boere*, 347.
[235] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 156-160.

Although Willem Adriaan van der Stel and his family reached the Cape on 23 January 1699, he was only inaugurated as governor on 11 February 1699. Böeseken and Schoeman concur that the initial period of Willem Adriaan's rule seemed propitious. The governor enjoyed a cordial relationship with the free burghers and even expanded the colony by granting several farms in the newly explored *'t Land van Waveren* (present-day Tulbagh).[236] However, it is imperative to remain cognisant of the influence exercised by Simon van der Stel on Willem Adriaan. As the governor's son, Willem Adriaan became accustomed to a level of deference, and the absolute authority wielded by his father. Moreover, he was appointed to prominent civil posts within the colony whilst still an adolescent. That this influence was sustained is evidenced by a set of instructions Willem Adriaan received from his father shortly after becoming governor. In his "Instructions" ("*Instructien*"), Simon van der Stel not only voiced his discontentment with the free burghers but stated that "it would not be offensive to grant to the old Company officials, of steady and good comportment, good lands which can be freely expanded so that they may lend a helping hand to progress."[237]

Since its inception, the VOC had expressly prohibited its officials from owning and farming land beyond that which they required for subsistence. Notwithstanding, this regulation was often flouted. Apart from the land held by previous Cape Commanders, such as Jan van Riebeeck and Zacharias Wagenaer, Simon van der Stel was given a farm of 891 *morgen* by the visiting Commissioner Hendrik van Rheede tot Drakenstein on 31 July 1685.[238] Following this grant, Van der Stel considered it his prerogative to grant land to capable and willing Company officials who were, above all, loyal to him. Accordingly, by 1698 the independent fiscal, Joan (or Jan) Blesius had been allocated two farms totalling 88 *morgen* and 400 rods,[239] whilst the *secunde*, Samuel Elsevier, had received 100 *morgen* of farmland.[240] Thus, by the time Willem Adriaan van der Stel became governor, the practice of granting land to Company officials at the Cape was a fait accompli. Willem Adriaan appears to have enthusiastically pursued this practice. During his rule, 1699-1707, the following grants were made to VOC functionaries:

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[236] A.J. Böeseken, *The Secluded Valley, Tulbagh: 't Land van Waveren, 1700-1804* (Pretoria: Preskor, 1989), 19.
[237] Simon van der Stel, "Instructien Gedateerd 30 Maart 1699 Door Gouverneur Simon van der Stel," in *Collectanea*, ed. Colin Graham Botha (Cape Town: The Van Riebeeck Society, 1924), 13.
[238] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, 31 July 1685, 166.
[239] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, Vol.16, 10 November 1689 – 17 November 1722, 1 August 1691, 297; WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, Vol.16, 10 November 1689 – 17 November 1722, 22 December 1694, 395.
[240] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, Vol.16, 10 November 1689 – 17 November 1722, 23 September 1698, 128.

Joan Blesius (Independent Fiscal)		
Nature of Grant:	**Date Granted:**	**Size:**
Erf	11 March 1699	77 Rods.[241]
Erf	25 September 1699	14 Rods.[242]
Farm	9 August 1705	59 *Morgen*, 593 rods.[243]
	Total:	59 *Morgen*, 684 rods.

Samuel Elsevier (*Secunde*)		
Nature of Grant:	**Date Granted:**	**Size:**
Erf	12 March 1699	146 Rods.[244]
Farm	23 June 1701	70 *Morgen*, 339 rods.[245]
	Total:	70 *Morgen*, 485 rods.

[241] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, 11 March 1699, 318.
[242] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, 25 September 1699, 336.
[243] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.11, 7 September 1703 – 10 August 1746, 9 August 1705, 9 August 1705, 45-47.
[244] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, 12 March 1699, 310.
[245] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, Vol.16, 10 November 1689 – 17 November 1722, 23 June 1701, 151.

Olof Berg (Military Captain)		
Nature of Grant:	**Date Granted:**	**Size:**
Erf	September 1701	65 Rods.[246]
Farm	26 September 1704	120 *Morgen*, 201 rods.[247]
Farm	28 July 1705	111 *Morgen*, 201 rods.[248]
	Total:	231 *Morgen*, 467 rods.

Petrus Calden (Dutch Reformed Minister of Cape Town)		
Nature of Grant:	**Date Granted:**	**Size:**
Farm	4 January 1699	61 *Morgen*, 977 Rods.[249]
Farm	3 October 1701	30 *Morgen*.[250]
	Total:	91 *Morgen*, 977 rods.

[246] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, September 1701, 407.
[247] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, Vol.16, 10 November 1689 – 17 November 1722, 26 September 1704, 488.
[248] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, Vol.16, 10 November 1689 – 17 November 1722, 28 July 1705, 194.
[249] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, Vol.16, 10 November 1689 – 17 November 1722, 4 January 1699, 137-138.
[250] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, Vol.16, 10 November 1689 – 17 November 1722, 3 October 1701, 157-158.

Willem ten Damme (Chief Surgeon)		
Nature of Grant:	**Date Granted:**	**Size:**
Farm	20 April 1706	60 *Morgen*; 30 rods.[251]
	Total:	60 *Morgen*; 30 rods.

Johannes Starrenburg (Landdrost of Stellenbosch)		
Nature of Grant:	**Date Granted:**	**Size:**
Farm	24 October 1704	60 *Morgen*, 200 rods.[252]
	Total:	60 *Morgen*, 200 rods.

The cumulative effect of these land grants meant that during the tenure of the Van der Stel dynasty (1679-1707), the top six Company officials applied for, and received, a total of 896 *morgen* and 716 rods. By contrast, based on the premise that the average free burgher farm was approximately 60 *morgen*,[253] six standard free burgher farms comprised a mere 360 *morgen* – less than half of the amount controlled by these six Company officials. However, this pales in comparison to the amount of land granted to the Van der Stels themselves. As mentioned, Simon van der Stel received 891 *morgen* and 380 rods in 1685. This was augmented on 11 March 1699 when he received the entire *Zeekoei Vallei* to farm and graze during his lifetime – an area of 20,944 *morgen*.[254] This exceeds even the amount of land controlled by the New Netherland patroon, Kiliaen van Rensselaer, whose holdings consisted of 17,200 *morgen* in 1634.[255]

[251] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.11, 7 September 1703 – 10 August 1746, 20 April 1706, 58-59.
[252] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.8, 11 January 1703 – 30 December 1704, 24 October 1704.
[253] Leonard Guelke, "Idealist Historical Geography: An Example," in *Historical Understanding in Geography: An Idealist Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 79.
[254] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, 11 March 1699, 306.
[255] Shirley W. Dunn, "Enlarging Rensselaerswijck: 17th Century Land Acquisition on the East Side of the River," in *A Beautiful and Fruitful Place: Selected Rensselaerswijck Papers*, ed. Nancy Anne McClure Zeller (Albany, New York: New Netherland Publications, 1991), 14.

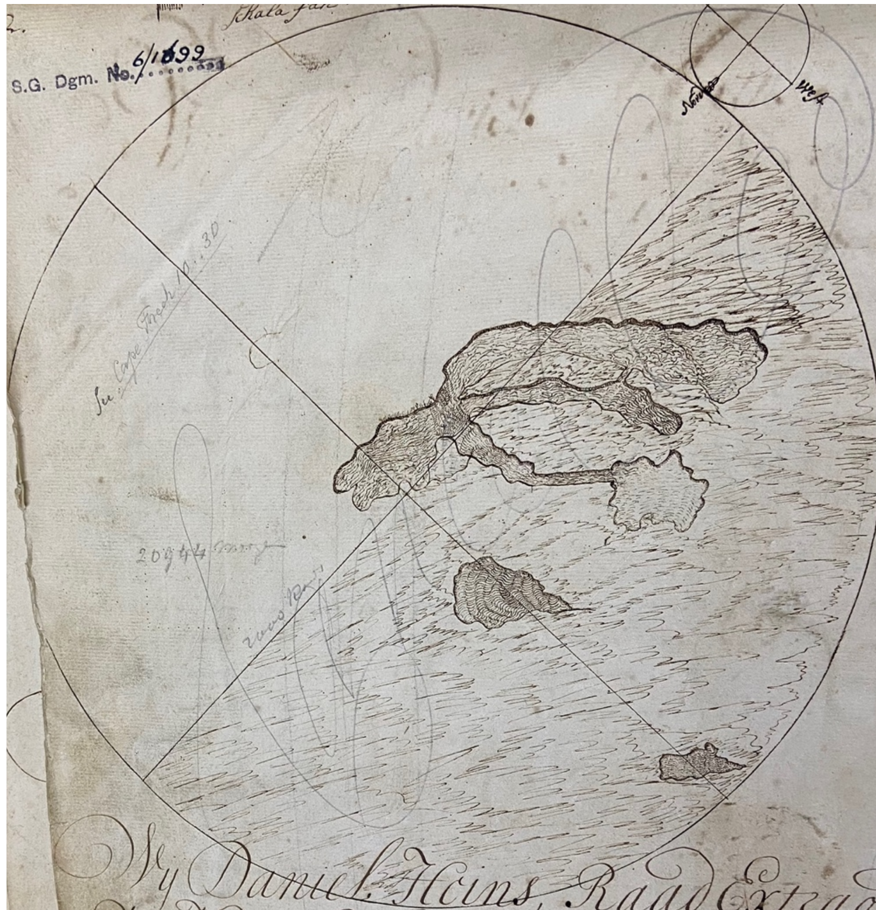

Figure 10: Diagram indicating the *Zeekoei Vallei*, granted to Simon van der Stel on 11 March 1699. WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, 11 March 1699, 306.

Another beneficiary was Frans van der Stel, who had remained at the Cape with his father following Willem Adriaan's departure to the Netherlands. Upon his brother's return as governor, Frans van der Stel received no less than three farms (totalling 185 *morgen* and 150 rods),[256] as well as a plot of land (*erf*) in Cape Town measuring 146 rods, 45 feet.[257] Nevertheless, of all the early eighteenth-century Cape land grants, that of Willem Adriaan is the most infamous. The farm, named Vergelegen, was issued to him by visiting Commissioner Wouter Valckenier on 1 February 1700 and encompassed 400 *morgen* of land in the Hottentots Holland region.[258]

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[256] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, 11 March 1699, 308-309; WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, Vol.16, 10 November 1689 – 17 November 1722, 26 September 1704, 494; WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, Vol.16, 10 November 1689 – 17 November 1722, 10 February 1707, 199.

[257] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, 12 March 1699, 316-317.

[258] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, February 1700, 346.

Despite having three official residences at his disposal (i.e., the Castle of Good Hope, De Tuynhuys, and Rustenburg), Willem Adriaan van der Stel also took possession of an *erf* in Cape Town which was 174 rods and 87 feet in size.[259] Nonetheless, Vergelegen was destined to become Willem Adriaan's principal residence and the bone of contention between him and the free burghers. There are varying accounts of how the Vergelegen estate may have appeared in the early eighteenth century. Willem Adriaan described it as "merely, a house with one story, and level with the ground, from the floor to the roof, nineteen feet high, with six apartments or rooms, a kitchen, and a small provision cellar."[260] Conversely, the free burghers considered it "a country seat, large beyond measure, and of such broad dimensions, as if it were a whole town."[261]

Figure 11: Unknown Artist. An Etching of Vergelegen taken from the *Korte Deductie van Willem Adriaen van der Stel*. 1706. The simplistic depiction of the homestead, and its vulnerability against the lions descending from the mountains, is noteworthy. National Library of South Africa, Cape Town.

[259] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, 12 March 1699, 314.
[260] Willem Adriaan van der Stel, *Korte Deductie van Willem Adriaen van der Stel* (Amsterdam, 1706), 6-10.
[261] Jacobus van der Heiden and Adam Tas, *Contra-Deductie, of te Grondige Demonstratie Van de valsheit der uitgegevene Deductie, By den Eedele Heer Willem Adriaan van der Stel* (Amsterdam: Nicolaas ten Hoorn, 1712), 3-5.

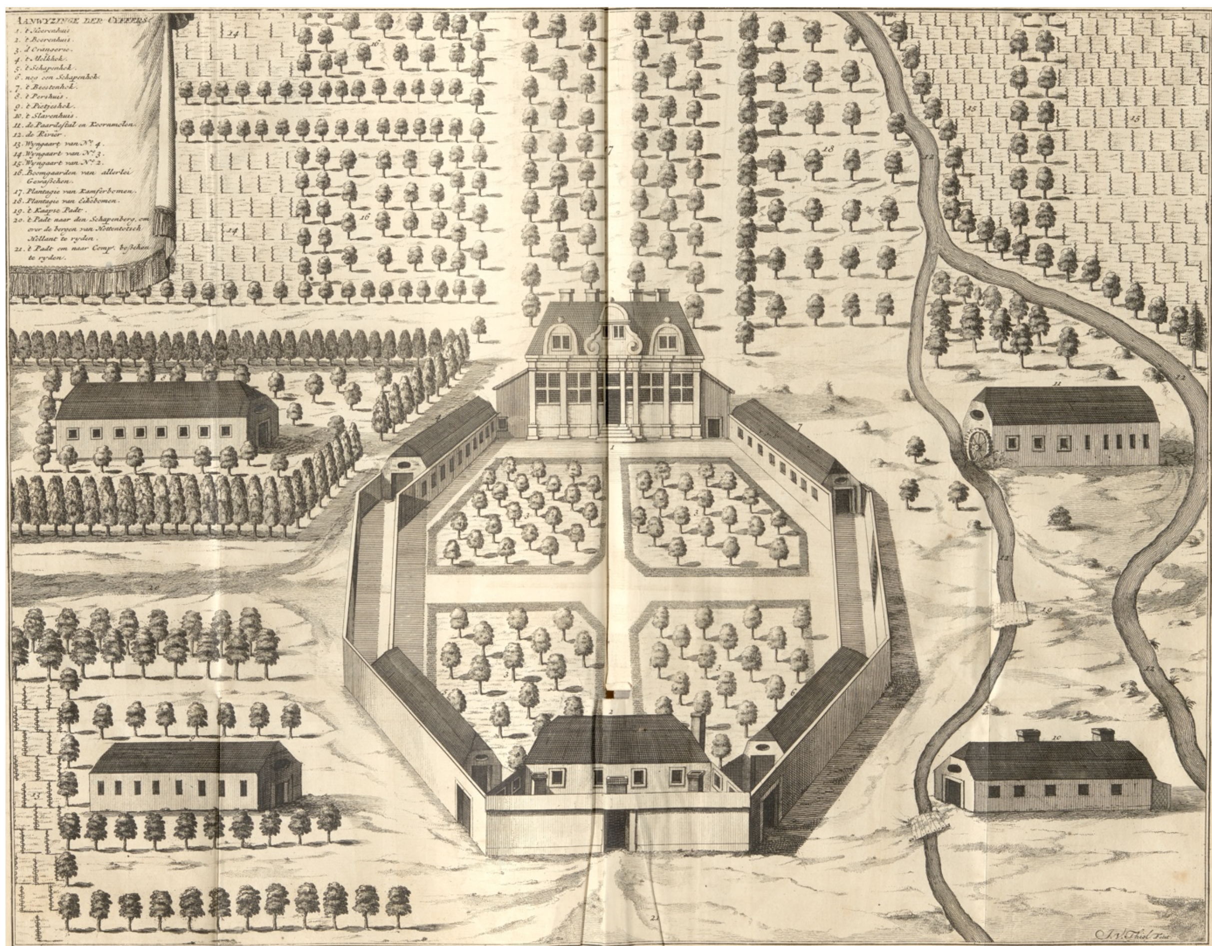

Figure 12: J.V Thiel. An Etching of Vergelegen from the perspective of the free burghers, as represented in the *Contra-Deductie, of te Grondige Demonstratie Van de valsheit der uitgegevene Deductie, By den Eedele Heer Willem Adriaan van der Stel*. 1712. In contrast to the illustration commissioned by Van der Stel, here the artist has decided to emphasise the various outbuildings and ornamental gardens associated with Vergelegen. National Library of South Africa, Cape Town.

These conflicting descriptions of Vergelegen signify an apparent disjuncture between the way Willem Adriaan van der Stel conceptualised his role in the colony and the way he was perceived by others. Consequently, deducing which narrative is the most historically accurate is not without its complications. However, there are clues within the archival record that supply an insight into the character and lifestyle of Willem Adriaan during his time as governor of Cape. The research conducted by Anna Böeseken is particularly valuable in this regard. Böeseken, having analysed Willem Adriaan's income and expenditure for 1701-1705, notes that the governor's annual income increased by 3,200 guilders in 1702, and 10,000 guilders in 1705.

Furthermore, Böeseken convincingly argues that Willem Adriaan was a man of expensive taste. For example, in 1701 he spent 219 guilders on "*Mainserwijn*" (presumably wine imported from Mainz, Germany), six wigs, various combs, and four pounds of sweet-smelling powder. The following year more than 188 gulden was spent on four additional wigs, eighty-eight drinking glasses, strings for a viola de gamba, and a bottle of jasmine perfume.[262] Equally instructive is the first-hand account of Peter Kolb (1675-1726).

Kolb, who received his doctorate in astronomy from the University of Halle, journeyed to the Cape in 1705 on the instructions of his patron, Baron Bernhard von Krosick, to map the stars of the Southern Hemisphere. Apart from astrological observations, Kold's inquisitive mind compelled him to compile detailed notes on the Cape's fauna, flora, and diverse peoples. These notes, published under *Caput Bona Spei Hodiernum* ('The Cape of Good Hope Today') in 1719, serendipitously contain information on Willem Adriaan van der Stel.[263] Kolb recounts that he initially thought the free burghers ignorant and greedy for their resentment of Van der Stel, and admits that this view was seemingly corroborated by the hospitality he received from Willem Adriaan. Notwithstanding, according to Kolb this amiability lasted less than half a year, after which "his [Willem Adriaan's] hatred fell on me" ("*ondertusschen viel zyn haat op my*"). Kolb attributes this behavioural shift to two factors. The first was Kolb's reluctance to entertain Willem Adriaan's sycophants, and the second was the failure of Company employees to report on Kolb's activities. Additionally, Kolb observed that the governor's character changed dramatically after Kolb sent a favourable report of Willem Adriaan as governor to the latter's friend and benefactor, Nicolaes Witsen. After this, there was no need to keep up an amiable pretence – confirming to Kolb the free burghers' allegations that the governor lived a completely different life from the one outwardly portrayed. Most incriminating of all was Willem Adriaan's attempt to persuade Kolb to support him in the developing conflict with the free burghers by gifting Kolb a barrel of Vergelegen wine.[264]

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[262] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 157-159.

[263] Nigel Penn and Adrien Delmas, "Peter Kolb and the Circulation of Knowledge about the Cape of Good Hope," in *Science, Africa and Europe: Processing Information and Creating Knowledge*, eds. Patrick Harries, Martin Lengwiler, and Nigel Penn (London: Routledge, 2018), 15-17.

[264] Peter Kolb, *Naaukeurige en Uitvoerige Beschryving van De Kaap De Goede Hoop* (Amsterdam: Balthazar Lakeman, 1727), 52-54.

Mutiny and Rebellion: The Cape Conflict as an Expression of Civil Resistance, 1632-1707

The protracted dispute between the free burghers and Willem Adriaan van der Stel constitutes the subject of a broad historical corpus,[265] and so will not be discussed in detail here. However, certain facets relevant to the topic will be underscored and scrutinised. By 1705 the extensive agricultural production and monopolisation of the *pacht* system by VOC officials precipitated open rebellion amongst certain sections of the Cape's free burgher population. The tension between these factions was unavoidable as both competed to meet the agricultural needs of a finite and predominantly local economy. That the Company officials had an advantage over the free burgher farmers is discernible in the agricultural holdings of the former and the observations of individuals such as Adam Tas. In his diary entry of 29 January 1706, Tas lamented that the upper strata of the VOC administration at the Cape "get priority in all things, whether it be the disposal of their wines or grain" and that they "are able to farm cheaper than the others, and build far better." Even more concerning for Tas and his fellow farmers were the perceived attempts by Company officials to "impoverish the burghers, and to keep them in a state of poverty."[266]

This concern was echoed by the Dutch writer Abraham Bogaerts (1663-1727) who, whilst visiting Willem ten Damme, overheard the *secunde* Samuel Elsevier remark to Ten Damme that "in three or four years' time there would be no more need for free burghers at the Cape" and that "there was a chance for four or five of them [VOC officials] to supply the Company at the Cape with everything."[267] Furthermore, between 1679 and 1705, Simon and Willem Adriaan van der Stel made several significant land grants to free blacks, such as Anthony van Angola and Louis van Bengal. Thus, the ambition of the Van der Stels to neutralise the free burghers, by supplanting them with more subservient free black farmers and VOC officials, seemed within reach.

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[265] See George McCall Theal, *Willem Adriaan van der Stel and Other Historical Sketches* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1913); Leo Fouché, *The Diary of Adam Tas (1705-1706): With an Inquiry Into the Complaints of the Colonists Against the Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel* (London: Fb&C Ltd, 2017); and Annabi Postma, *Governor or Robber Baron? The Story of Vergelegen and Willem Adriaan van der Ste*l (Cape Town: Annabi Publishers, 1996).

[266] Tas, *The Diary of Adam Tas*, 172-173.

[267] Abraham Bogaerts, *Historiche Reizen Door d'oostersche Deelen van Asia* (Amsterdam: Nicolaas ten Hoorn, 1711), 476.

Nevertheless, the Van der Stels and their allies underestimated the tenacity of their opponents. On 5 January 1705, a group of free burghers, including Adam Tas and Jacobus van der Heiden, compiled a memorandum consisting of thirty-eight articles protesting the abuses of the Van der Stels and other VOC officials. Four of the articles are of particular interest. In Article Two, the aforementioned free burghers objected specifically to Willem Adriaan van der Stel's ownership and management of Vergelegen. According to the free burghers, the farm, which contained more than 400,000 vines and 10,000 sheep, was large enough to sustain fifty free burghers. However, most offensive was Willem Adriaan's employment of over sixty VOC servants on Vergelegen – all of whom were provisioned and paid at the Company's expense. Similarly, Articles Eleven and Twenty-One articulated dissatisfaction at the extensive landholdings and arrogance of individuals such as Frans van der Stel, the Reverend Petrus Calden and Samuel Elsevier. The free burghers were especially incensed at Elsevier's having been granted the VOC outpost, Klapmuts, as two other free burghers (Gerrit Jansz Visser and Barend Hendriksz) had allegedly been driven off their farms by Governor Simon van der Stel some years previously for being too near this outpost. Finally, Article Twenty-Six confirms Peter Kolb's allegation that Willem Adriaan was not disinclined to accept, and offer, bribes. The authors of the memorandum posited that to obtain the title deeds to their properties, free burghers were first required to "greet the Governor richly with presents."[268]

The frequency and commonality of the complaints against Willem Adriaan van der Stel by independent observers, such as Kolb, Bogaerts and Tas, confirms that the governor's actions were in contravention of official VOC policy and had a deleterious effect on the Cape's free burgher population. The subsequent protest against Willem Adriaan by members of this population has often been heralded by South African historians, notably George McCall Theal and Hermann Giliomee, as a singular event and the germ of Afrikanerdom.[269] Notwithstanding, the discord between Willem Adriaan van der Stel and the free burghers at the Cape is simply one example of the tension that often developed between settlers and the colonial government within the Dutch mercantile empire, and constitutes part of a well-established tradition of protest traceable to the inception of the Dutch Republic.

[268] H.C.V. Leibbrandt, *Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope: The Defence of Willem Adriaan van der Stel* (Cape Town: W.A. Richards & Sons, 1897), 53-59.

[269] George McCall Theal, *Willem Adriaan van der Stel and Other Historical Sketches* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1913, 249-251; Giliomee, *The Afrikaners,* 84-91.

As early as 1632, several free burghers in Batavia sent a petition (*smeekschrift*) to the Lords Seventeen objecting to the prohibition of free burgher participation in the intra-Asia trade network.[270] The free burghers of New Netherland were even more vocal than their South African and Indonesian counterparts. Jaap Jacobs notes that, following the abolition of GWC's monopoly of the fur trade in North America in 1640, GWC employees began settling permanently in New Netherland and soon developed a distinct free burgher identity. There are remarkable parallels between these free burgher societies, especially concerning the nature of their protest against authority. For example, in New Netherland during the 1640s, a group of influential free burghers called the Twelve Men (*Twaalf Man*) attempted to dislodge the unpopular director of the colony, Willem Kieft (1597-1647). Ironically, the establishment of the Twelve Men was Kieft's attempt to arbitrate the disastrous Wappinger War (1643-1645) between Dutch settlers and Native Americans.[271] Imperatively, the Twelve Men did not limit themselves to simply advising Kieft on the war. In January 1642 they approached Kieft with a petition requesting changes to the administrative structure of the colony, including greater free burgher representation on the governing council. Kieft's recalcitrance prompted the free burgher leadership, reconstituted as the Eight Men (*Acht Man*), to send a letter to the directors of the GWC urging the recall of Kieft. After being informed of the letter's contents, Kieft responded by imprisoning and interrogating members of the Eight Men and their associates. However, this was to no avail, and Kieft was recalled to the Netherlands in 1647.[272]

Similarly, once Willem Adriaan van der Stel became aware of the free burghers' memorandum against him, he undertook a series of countermeasures to neutralise the threat. Firstly, he drafted a testimonial praising his competence as governor and circulated it to be signed throughout the colony. Significantly, many who signed this testimonial were free blacks, some of whom had been emancipated and granted land by the Van der Stels. Secondly, Willem Adriaan ordered the arrest of Tas and other prominent signatories of the memorandum. Once imprisoned, these individuals were interrogated to extract "confessions" that were used to discredit the memorandum. Thirdly, the governor assembled numerous affidavits based on the Company's records to prove his innocence. These documents and the "confessions" were sent to the Lords Seventeen as supplements to his written defence.[273]

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[270] Niemeijer, *Batavia: Een Koloniale Samenleving in de 17*[de] *Eeuw,* 30-33.
[271] Also known as Kieft's War. A conflict led by the Director-General of New Netherland, William Kieft, in which Dutch colonists killed over 100 Native Americans in Pavonia (now Jersey City).
[272] Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 133-142.
[273] Tas, *The Diary of Adam Tas*, 253.

Yet, as in the case of Willem Kieft, these countermeasures were ultimately futile. On 17 April 1707, the ship *Cattendijk* arrived in Table Bay carrying a letter signed by the Lords Seventeen on 30 October 1706. The letter ordered the governor, the *secunde* (Samuel Elsevier), the minister (Reverend Petrus Calden), and the Landdrost of Stellenbosch (Johannes Starrenburg) to return to the Netherlands with immediate effect, while Frans van der Stel was forever banned from the Company's territories. Finally, the remaining VOC officials at the Cape were strictly prohibited from owning land and trading in wheat, wine, or cattle.[274] The free burghers, instead of being magnanimous in their victory, took advantage of Van der Stel's dismissal to seek vengeance against those who they believed betrayed their cause – the free blacks.

A Failed Experiment? The Free Black Farmers After the Van der Stels, 1707-1720

It is tempting to view the free blacks as existing in a symbiotic relationship with the Van der Stel dynasty, or, at the very least, to imagine them as the beneficiaries of Simon and Willem Adriaan's schemes against the free burghers. There are at least three pieces of evidence to substantiate this notion, namely: Simon van der Stel's mixed-race heritage, Simon and Willem Adriaan's loathing of the free burghers, and the purported kindness they exhibited towards enslaved people. For example, Böeseken states that shortly before his death on 24 June 1712, Simon van der Stel manumitted fourteen enslaved people and encouraged them to settle down as free black farmers.[275]

However, contrary to Ad Biewenga's claims that "during the tenure of Simon van der Stel and his son Willem Adriaan van der Stel, many slaves gained their freedom" and that "both Van der Stels made an effort to 'do right' by their slaves",[276] neither Simon nor Willem Adriaan should be considered benevolent, abolitionist prototypes. For example, in 1685 Commissioner Van Rheede reprimanded Simon van der Stel for the disorderly state of the Company's slave lodge, and his cruel neglect of the enslaved inhabitants.[277] Furthermore, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, by his own admission, purchased more than 200 enslaved individuals between 1699 and 1705.[278] Comparatively, the relatively wealthy free burgher Hendrik Schneuwindt owned only seventeen enslaved people in 1701, despite having three farms and a market garden along the Liesbeeck River.[279]

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[274] Böeseken, *Simon van der Stel en Sy Kinders*, 201.
[275] Böeseken, *Slaves and Free Blacks at the Cape*, 59-60.
[276] Biewenga, *De Kaap de Goede Hoop*, 282-283.
[277] Schoeman, *Here & Boere*, 100.
[278] Van der Stel, *Korte Deductie*, 11.
[279] Shell, *Children of Bondage,* 154.

Information of the everyday experiences of enslaved people on Vergelegen can be gleaned from an archaeological excavation that was conducted in 1995. One of the areas of interest, identified via a synthesis of cartographic and archival sources, was the estate's slave lodge. Although there were no visible traces of the structure on the surface, archaeologists were able to expose the foundation of the building. According to the *opgaafrol* of 1709, the slave lodge was 122 Cape feet in length and 38 Cape feet broad. This was corroborated by the archaeologists, who established that the dimensions of the building were 40 x 12 m.[280] Whilst this might seem commodious, especially compared to the cramped conditions of the VOC's slave lodge, it must be remembered that there were "some hundreds of slaves, both the Company's and his own" working for Willem Adriaan van der Stel on Vergelegen.[281] Yet, the slave lodge on Vergelegen had several advantages compared to its counterpart in Cape Town, which suggests that Willem Adriaan could not have been entirely indifferent to the basic needs of the enslaved people on his estate. Unlike the Company's slave lodge, the slave lodge on Vergelegen had windows, a tiled floor, and two hearths.[282]

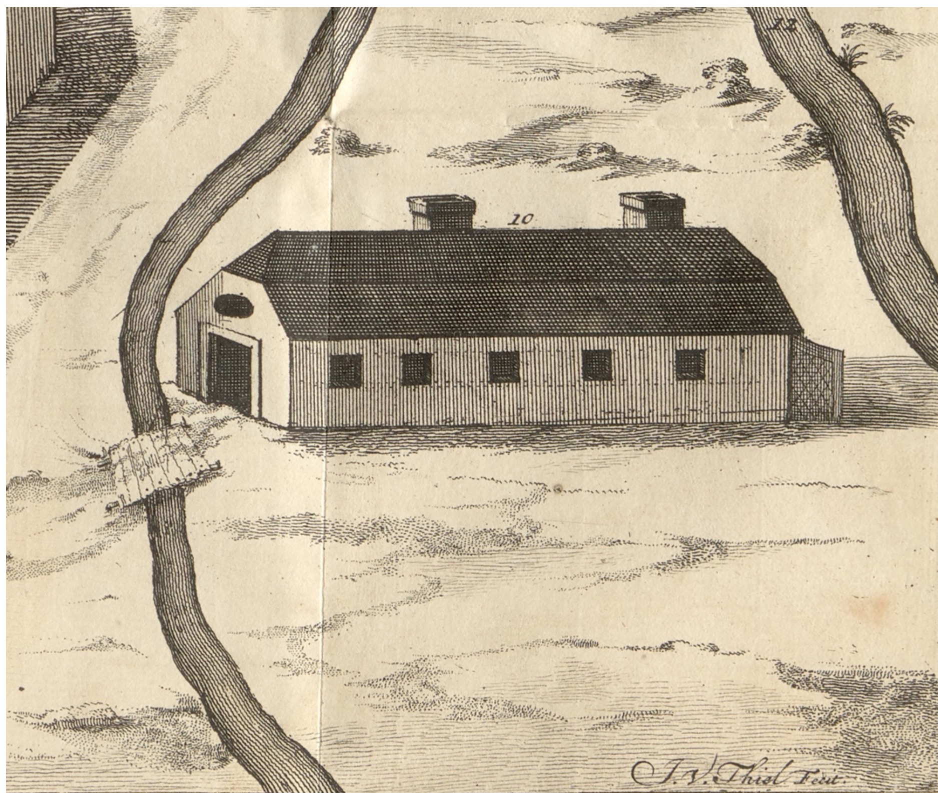

Figure 13: The slave lodge at Vergelegen (enlargement from Figure 12).

[280] Ann Markell, Martin Hall, and Carmel Schrire, "The Historical Archaeology of Vergelegen, an Early Farmstead at the Cape of Good Hope," *Historical Archaeology* 29, no. 1 (1995): 16.
[281] Tas, *The Diary of Adam Tas*, 239-241.
[282] Markell, Hall, and Schrire, "The Historical Archaeology of Vergelegen," 21.

His treatment of enslaved people notwithstanding, Willem Adriaan managed to secure the allegiance of the Cape's free black population in his dispute with the free burghers. This is evidenced by the thirteen free black signatures attached to the testimonial praising Van der Stel's governorship.[283] Two of these names are of particular interest: Louis van Bengal and Domingo van Bengal. As outlined in Chapter two, Louis van Bengal arrived at the Cape as an enslaved person sometime before 1666 and bought his freedom in 1672. Louis subsequently took up farming in Jonkershoek and received the official title deed to his farm on 15 October 1692 from Governor Simon van der Stel. It is unclear when Louis' compatriot, Domingo van Bengal, arrived at the Cape. This ambiguity can be attributed to the concurrent existence of two different free blacks named 'Domingo' at the Cape in the period between 1655 and 1706. The first Domingo was purchased by Jan van Riebeeck from Pieter Kemp in 1655.[284] Therefore, Domingo would likely have been in his sixties when he signed Willem Adriaan van der Stel's testimonial in 1706. A more likely candidate is the second Domingo van Bengal, who bought his freedom from Matthijs Greeff in 1689.[285] Like Louis van Bengal, this Domingo was given land by Simon van der Stel in 1692. This property measured twenty square roods and was situated in Table Valley.[286]

Apart from a shared geographical heritage, Louis van Bengal and Domingo van Bengal were both free black landowners. This undoubtedly sustained an enduring loyalty to Simon van der Stel and his successor, Willem Adriaan. Nonetheless, an equally plausible scenario is that the Van der Stels expected fealty from the recipients of their generosity. Kolb and Tas both attest to Willem Adriaan's willingness to engage in bribery. Moreover, Tas notes that, in his attempt to gather signatures for his testimonial, the governor also deployed intimidation tactics. On 20 February 1706, Tas writes:

> This night we heard a loud knocking at the door, the caller being Abraham Bleusel, who had come riding from Drakenstein to tell me how he and some fifteen other Frenchmen had been to the house of François du Toit, where the landdrost [Johannes Starrenburg] wanted them to sign a document in favour of the Governor. First, the landdrost tried to induce them to sign by promises, and afterwards with fierce threats…A ruffian stood guard at the door, which he had locked.[287]

[283] Van der Stel, *Korte Deductie*, 57.
[284] Böeseken, *Slaves and Free Blacks at the Cape*, 9.
[285] Böeseken, *Slaves and Free Blacks at the Cape*, 85.
[286] WCARS, *Inventory of the Cape Title Deeds, 1652-1825*, Vol.10, 10 November 1657 – 15 May 1703, 17 March 1692, 213.
[287] Tas, *The Diary of Adam Tas*, 198-199.

Whatever the exact nature of the relationship between the Van der Stels and the free blacks, their close association endeared neither group to the free burghers. The Van der Stels and their allies were at least offered the opportunity of returning to the Netherlands with their wealth and status intact – with some, such as Joan Blesius and Olof Berg, even being allowed to remain at the Cape and continue their farming operations unmolested. The free blacks were less fortunate. Whilst Biewenga asserts that the Van der Stels' patronage of the free blacks elicited "jealous reactions and a sense of being wronged"[288] from the free burghers, the first recorded evidence of this animosity can be found in one of Adam Tas' diary entries. Concerning Willem Adriaan's testimonial, Tas wrote on 21 February 1706 that "a number of blacks, who had been banished and whipped, had signed, and now the Governor is sure an honest man, but a sorrier potentate I have never seen who must recover his lost honour at the hands of rogues."[289] This was followed by a letter to the Lords Seventeen in April 1707. Therein, Tas and Jacobus van der Heiden emphasise that, should the colony come under attack from a foreign power, they (i.e., the free burghers) could expect no assistance from the Cape's enslaved population, even less so from the free blacks, as "the blood of Cham [Ham] is not to be trusted."[290]

A similar view was held by one of the free burgher faction's staunchest supporters, Abraham Bogaerts. Recounting his time at the Cape in 1706, Bogaerts mentions how, to his astonishment, the free blacks at the Cape increased both in number and pride, being also allowed to carry weapons in the presence of Christians (i.e., the free burghers). Bogaerts was especially resentful of Willem Basson, to whom Willem Adriaan had awarded a portion of the meat *pacht* in 1705 – Basson was the son of the formerly enslaved Angela van Bengal, and the de facto leader of the free black fishermen.[291] The accounts of individuals such as Bogaerts, Tas and Van der Heiden not only illustrate a hostility towards the free blacks but also allude to a growing anxiety amongst a section of the free burgher population. For prosperous farmers such as Tas and Van der Heiden, an alliance between the Company officials and the colony's free black population posed a significant threat. It follows that, with the dismissal of Willem Adriaan van der Stel, free burghers like Adam Tas would have sought to eliminate the perceived threat posed by free black farmers.

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288 Biewenga, *De Kaap de Goede Hoop*, 282-283.
289 Tas, *The Diary of Adam Tas*, 198-199.
290 Schoeman, *Here & Boere*, 212-213.
291 Bogaerts, *Historiche Reizen*, 492-494.

There are several ways in which this could be achieved. Firstly, by ostracising and withholding support from free black farmers. During this period farmers, whether free black or European, often depended on the assistance of family members or neighbouring farmers. As a minority group in the colony, the free blacks were even more dependent on local support networks. Secondly, wealthier free burgher farmers could buy out struggling free black. Thirdly, free burghers in administrative positions, such as the Church or the Orphan Chamber, were able to deny loans to free blacks. These points are not mere conjecture. An examination of the annual census record for Stellenbosch between 1685-1715 exhibits a drastic decline in the number of free blacks inhabiting the district (see Figure 14).

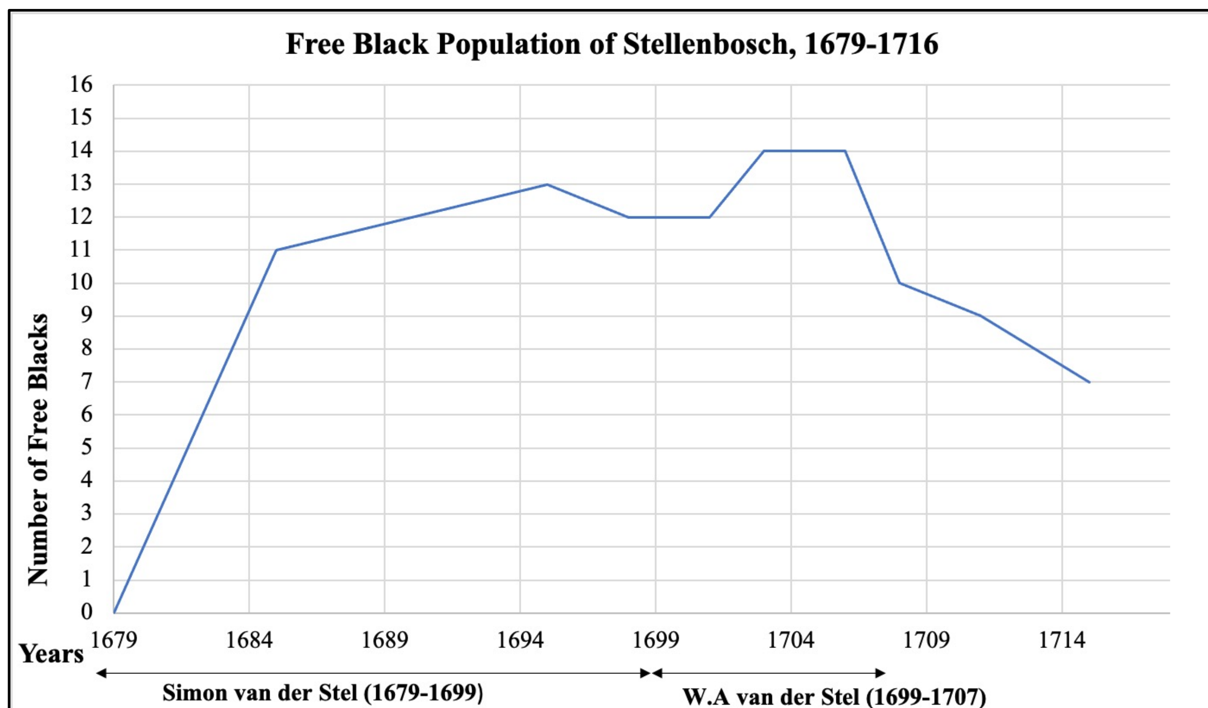

Figure 14: Diagram illustrating the decline of the free black population of Stellenbosch. WCARS, *Inventaris van Opgaafrolle, 1692-1845*, Vol.183-185, 1685-1716.

The decline of Stellenbosch's free black population is further corroborated by Shell, who maintains that the pursuit of more sustainable economic opportunities precipitated a general exodus of free blacks from Stellenbosch to Cape Town after 1706. Furthermore, Shell attributes stricter restrictions on manumission after 1708 to the successful free burgher revolt against Willem Adriaan van der Stel. Regrettably for the free blacks, Cape Town was not the panacea they had envisioned. According to Shell, free blacks in Cape Town faced numerous obstacles, including "prejudice, poverty, the inability to obtain credit, and also extreme difficulty in obtaining gainful employment."

The most tangible expression of free burgher hostility against the free black in Cape Town occurred in 1727 when free burgher councillors forbade free blacks from selling "such pathetic sundries as toast and cakes" on the street.[292]

Despite the attempts by several scholars, such as Baartman and Giliomee, to elucidate the decline of Stellenbosch's agrarian free black population, the theories which they have advanced thus far are primarily reiterations of an observation initially made by Elphick and Shell, namely that: "…part of the problem was lack of capital or credit." Elphick and Shell elaborate on this by suggesting that "the colonists and officials could very easily stop the free blacks from rising beyond a certain point by not extending credit", but add that "no evidence for such discrimination has yet been found."[293] Given the haphazard nature of the archival record and the reluctance of most individuals to implicate themselves directly, it is unlikely that documentary evidence of this discrimination, specifically on the extension of credit, will ever be found. Instead, based on the sentiments of individuals such as Bogaerts, Tas and Van der Heiden, it is far more plausible that discrimination against free blacks was articulated in covert and less tangible forms. Where historians have attempted to augment Elphick and Shell's interpretation, as in the work of Hattingh, the information has been of a general nature and does not explicitly concern free black farmers. Thus, Hattingh concludes that the free black farmers ultimately failed due to the "specialised demands of wheat farming, the low price the Company was prepared to pay for wheat, the distance from the market, the difficulties of transport, the size of the farms, and the high price of additional labour."[294] These factors undoubtedly compounded the already precarious position of free black farmers. However, Schoeman, echoing Guelke and Shell, emphasises that the challenges highlighted by Hattingh were also experienced by many white, free burgher farmers.[295]

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[292] Shell, *Children of Bondage,* 379-393.
[293] Elphick and Robert Shell, "Intergroup Relations: Khoikhoi, Settlers, Slaves and Free Blacks, 1652-1795," 224.
[294] Hattingh. "Grondbesit in die Tafelvallei. Deel 1," 41.
[295] Schoeman, *Early Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1717*, 329.

The Dutch Cape Colony's free black population, whatever their occupation, invariably began their free lives at a significant financial disadvantage compared to most of the free burghers. Many, such as Louis van Bengal, depleted what little capital they had by purchasing their freedom from slavery. Despite this, some free blacks overcame such impediments and achieved prosperity as farmers in the Jonkershoek Valley of Stellenbosch. In this regard, the free blacks were assisted by the Van der Stel dynasty – who conspired to replace the free burgher farmers with a new class of VOC landowners and subservient free black landholders. Notwithstanding, in the ensuing conflict between the Van der Stels and the free burghers, the free blacks were the ultimate losers.

Before the civil unrest of 1705-1707, some free black farmers, like their free burgher counterparts, managed to attain a level of prosperity. However, following the departure of Willem Adriaan van der Stel and his allies, the remaining free black farmers were subjected to increasing discrimination as perceived beneficiaries of the Van der Stels from a disgruntled section of the free burgher population. Members of this free burgher faction, ensconced in charitable organisations such as the Church and the Orphan Chamber, were ideally positioned to withhold assistance or credit from free black farmers. Nor was the urban free black population safe. Apart from the aforementioned 1727 legislation preventing free black hawkers from selling confectionaries, free blacks faced resentment and competition from the "poor whites" in Cape Town and Stellenbosch. Consequently, as Shell puts it, the free blacks were "literally driven into the sea for employment."[296]

[296] Shell, *Children of Bondage,* 393.

Conclusion

While free black farmers had largely disappeared from Jonkershoek by the 1720s, their existence as independent agriculturalists had significant implications for contemporary discourse on landownership and the racialisation of South African society. During my research, it became apparent that the free blacks, specifically free black farmers, of the Dutch Cape Colony occupied an ambiguous and often precarious position within Cape colonial society – they were neither enslaved nor entirely 'free'. This vulnerability, I suggest, made them especially susceptible to external pressures, both economic and socio-political. The latter is most perceptible in the polemic, racial rhetoric directed against the free blacks by the free burghers following the dismissal of Willem Adriaan van der Stel. Significantly, the inflammatory statements of individuals such as Adam Tas intensified during the eighteenth century, as discrimination against free blacks became both de facto and de jure. For example, a mere twenty years after Willem Adriaan van der Stel left the Cape, a militia composed exclusively of free blacks and free Chinese was established in Cape Town,[297] and in 1788 several Stellenbosch burghers refused to serve under their new corporal, Johannes Hartogh, on account of his "blackish colour" and "heathen descent."[298]

The early eighteenth century was also characterised by an economic shift that had a negative impact on free black farmers. With the northward expansion of the colony into the Tulbagh region in 1700, a new frontier was opened. Unlike Table Valley and Stellenbosch, this new theatre of colonisation favoured a chiefly pastoral rather than a mixed agricultural economy. Furthermore, by 1713 most of the arable farmland around Cape Town and Stellenbosch had already been parcelled out. This saturation added a constant trickle to the steady stream of *trekboers* migrating north. This economic and demographic shift meant the "initiative passed from the Company to the European migrant farmers."[299] There is no evidence to suggest that the free blacks became *trekboers* in any significant number. Instead, the expansion of the meat industry in the eighteenth century compounded the already precarious economic position of many free black farmers and accelerated their decline.

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[297] Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, 147.

[298] Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, "The Origins and Entrenchment of European Dominance at the Cape, 1652-c.1840," in *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, ed. Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 547.

[299] Richard Elphick, "The Khoisan to c. 1770," in *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, ed. Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), 21-24.

This thesis set out to determine the economic, social, and political factors that precipitated the rise and fall of the free black farmers of Jonkershoek Valley between 1679 and 1710. In pursuing this line of enquiry, my research has revaluated existing hypotheses and suggested novel, hitherto unexplored areas of inquiry. This was achieved through the consultation of original archival sources and an extensive perusal of secondary literature on the subject. The three chapters of the thesis have been structured chronologically and thematically to facilitate the development of my central argument and to ensure a coherent narrative.

Chapter one introduced the heterogenous landscape inhabited by the Cape's free black population during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This landscape was the consequence of interactions between four interconnected themes. The Dutch Revolt (1568-1648) constituted the first theme and underscored the centrality of Dutch technological innovations and military objectives in stimulating Dutch mercantile expansion. Subsequently, the establishment and organisation of the two principal Dutch trading companies, the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company, formed the nucleus of the second theme. The expansion of these companies into the Indian and Atlantic oceans had significant ramifications and facilitated the emergence of new, hybridised colonial societies. The third theme of this chapter considered the parallels between these societies – with a specific emphasis on Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia and South America. Finally, the fourth theme examined the inception of the Dutch Cape colony and the evolution of Cape society. Furthermore, the fourth theme explored the position of the Cape's free black population in relation to the colony's other inhabitants.

The relationship between the free blacks and the Van der Stel dynasty formed the basis of chapter two and the fulcrum of this thesis. The chapter began by examining the diverse origins of the Cape's free black population, their legal status at the Cape, and their occupations – particularly the initial agricultural pursuits of some free blacks within the peri-urban environment of Table Valley. The chapter introduced Governor Simon van der Stel, the establishment of Stellenbosch, and Van der Stel's ambition to supplant the recalcitrant free burgher farmers with a class of loyal, subservient free blacks. The primary locus of Simon van der Stel's experiment was identified as the Jonkershoek Valley in Stellenbosch.

Three case studies were selected to trace the trajectory of Jonkershoek's free black farmers: Anthony and Manuel van Angola (consortium), Jan and Marquart van Ceylon (consortium), and Louis van Bengal. The chapter concluded with an overview of the factors that have thus far been advanced by historians to explain the decline of free black agriculturalists and posits that the relationship between the free blacks and the Van der Stel dynasty was equally instrumental in determining the fate of Jonkershoek's free black farmers.

Chapter three evaluated the decline of the free black agrarian class, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between the free blacks and the Van der Stel dynasty. The influence of Simon van der Stel on his son and successor, Willem Adriaan, proved imperative in shaping the opinions and policies of the latter – especially concerning the free burghers and land ownership amongst VOC officials at the Cape. The ensuing conflict between the free burghers and Willem Adriaan van der Stel marked the climax of the chapter and the narrative of the free black farmers. With the departure of their patron in 1707, the vulnerability of the free blacks made them susceptible to the vengeance of the victorious free burgher faction. The chapter concluded that this vengeance, though not always readily discernible in existent archival sources, is nonetheless evidenced by the racially charged rhetoric of individuals such as Adam Tas, and by the drastic decline of Stellenbosch's free black population after 1707.

Despite a revived interest in the Dutch Cape Colony, free black farmers remain underrepresented. Therefore, this thesis should be considered as exploratory research concerned with the economic, social, and political factors that facilitated the flourishing, however briefly, of a free black agrarian class in the Jonkershoek Valley of Stellenbosch. While the thesis considered multiple themes, future research opportunities remain viable. The research process also uncovered other areas of research that fall outside of this project's scope. For example, scholarship on the extensive patronage networks and civil resistance within VOC and GWC colonies remains limited. Additional research on these topics can assist in elucidating the power dynamics within families such as the Van der Stels, and various protest actions that often accompanied the abuse of authority.

In terms of the free blacks, and free black farmers, there are numerous avenues suitable for future research. For example, a comparative analysis of free black farmers in the Dutch Atlantic constitutes a potentially productive field of study and could function as a model for examining the transoceanic parallels between marginalised groups within Dutch colonial societies. Another unexplored area of research pertains to the interaction, and partial integration, of some free black farmers with their European counterparts and the implications of this process on the socio-economic matrix of Stellenbosch during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A final suggestion for future research would be an analysis of free black participation in the loan farm system, which began to proliferate from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards.

The free blacks of Jonkershoek subsisted as autonomous agriculturalists for a comparatively brief period. With the advantage of hindsight, it is tempting to dismiss their contribution to South African history – as many historians have done. Yet, doing so would invariably disregard the remarkable robustness, agency, and dexterity of this group in maintaining their socio-economic position in Dutch colonial society. This was a position that, despite governmental support, became increasingly untenable due to external and internal pressures (i.e., minimal investment capital, fluctuating markets, lack of intercommunal support networks, and racial discrimination). Imperatively, sustained research on these free black farmers can enrich current discourse on the mercurial social, economic, and political dynamics within Dutch colonies, and how other vulnerable groups negotiated freedom.

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