

TRACING PERSONAL ACCOUNTS IN COLONIAL KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS: TOWARDS A WATERMARK DATABASE FOR THE CAPE COLONY, 1652–1795

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ABSTRACT

This paper initiates a watermark database that authenticates dates and origins for paper at the Cape Colony during the period of Dutch administration (1652–1795). Since surveys of watermarks used in mainland Europe do not adequately correspond to those used at the Cape, it is important to examine paper from the Cape. This article presents the first survey of such watermarks by studying the paper used by the Dutch East India Company (the VOC) to minute the *Resolusies* (Resolutions) of the Council of Policy meetings, connecting those watermarks with the dates of specific governors, commissioners, and chambers. The survey accomplishes three tasks: it allows for the tracing of paper routes and knowledge networks in the early modern world, it reinforces the reliability of historical records for this period of Cape and South African history, and it improves accuracy for establishing sources for the paper and its watermarks, wherever they ultimately end up. Since the Cape did not have a printing press until after the period of Dutch administration, the weight of handwritten tradition was important in the communication and dissemination of ideas, more so than elsewhere in the colonial world. A watermark database based on VOC archives would therefore be a valuable aid to the study of the manuscript culture of this region, which is still too little known.

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Paper and print in South Africa have a troubled history. Consecutive Dutch and British colonial administrations (1652–1910) depended on imports from overseas for their paper.¹ Only when the Union of South Africa was founded in 1910 were plans developed for an industrial paper mill, which was established in 1920 just outside Johannesburg.² The first

- 1 In legal terms, the Cape only became a Netherlands colony in 1691, when Simon van der Stel was appointed governor; earlier, it was a VOC-administered territory with Van der Stel as commander. Paper at the Cape could be from European or Japanese origin. H. C. V. Leibbrandt could find no evidence of mills engaged in paper production at the Cape; *Précis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope: Requesten (Memorials) 1715–1806*, 5 vols. (Cape Town: Cape Times, 1905–1989).
- 2 The first paper mill at the Cape was Premier Paper Mills at Kliprivier. The South African Pulp and Paper Industry (SAPPI) was founded in 1936 “with the idea of manufacturing fine writing and printing papers for the first time in South Africa in an integrated pulp and paper mill.” H. H. Myburgh and A. A. Mackenzie, “The Production of Timber for Pulpwood,” *South African Forestry Journal* 58 (March 1966): 27.



Fig. 1 The oldest example of Cape print. Paper, trimmed to 92 × 105 mm. Recto emblem, “ALMANACH / voor ‘t jaar 1796.” and “Gedruckt by, I.C. RITTER. / Aan.CAAP de.GOEDEHOOP”; verso days of the week (Dutch) and moon calendar (Latin). No watermark. Photo courtesy of the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), Grey Collection, no shelf mark or call number.

printing press, however, arrived with the handover of power from the Dutch to the British in 1795, and the oldest extant printed work consists of a smidgen of an almanac from the Cape (fig. 1).³ That the first press was installed at the Cape need not surprise us. It was the colony’s primary settlement, founded as a refreshment station by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1652 on its trade route between Europe and the East. The Cape’s strategic position halfway along the route explains the absence of a printing press during the entire period of Dutch administration, when other VOC-administered territories already had their own presses. (Sri Lanka, which had a Dutch administration from 1640 to 1796, welcomed its first printing press in 1734;⁴ Jakarta, governed by the Dutch from 1619 until 1942, received its press a century earlier.⁵) At the Cape, where

3 The authoritative Afrikaans study on the history of print in South Africa remains P. J. Nienaber, *‘n Beknopte geskiedenis van die Hollands-Afrikaanse drukpers in Suid-Afrika* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1943).

4 Katherine S. Diehl, “The Dutch Press in Ceylon, 1734–96,” *Library Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (July 1972): 329; P. J. Ondaantje, “A Tabular List of Original Works and Translations, Published by the Late Dutch Government of Ceylon at Their Printing Press at Colombo,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, n.s., 1, no. 1/2 (1865): 141–44.

5 The book *General Beschrijvinghe van Indien* was printed in Jakarta in 1638 with the imprint “Naer de Copije ghedruckt tot Batavia, in de Druckerye vande Gansen Pen. Anno 1638.” The press’s name, “Gansen Pen” (quill), may very

all outbound and inbound crews moored, exchanges about current affairs and information on trade routes and competitors were of a potentially sensitive nature to the VOC. Knowledge meant power, and the VOC, from its founding in 1602, was ever conscious of the importance of paper and print in the dispersal of information and in maintaining its position as the largest global trading company. Indeed, as early as 1619, the Netherlands States General granted the VOC “the privilege of printing documents related to its possessions, real or desired, in Asia,” and so the company was able to produce and control its own flow of information.⁶ Such control meant that VOC travel guides for future sailors and pamphlets could strategically promote the company’s activities amongst prospective investors. Similarly, the Company enforced strict rules aboard its ships on the availability of writing materials, and upon return to Amsterdam the remaining sheets aboard would be counted against the official correspondence that had taken place.⁷

The VOC’s control over paper and print is exemplified through its refusal to establish a printing press, as can be reconstructed from the minutes of its local governing body, the Council of Policy. In 1782 the Council of Policy forwarded a special request from its bookbinder directly to the VOC governors in Amsterdam, the Lords XVII, politely explaining that the growing settlement would be greatly aided by the advent of a printing press. The Lords’ refusal arrived by return of post late the following year.⁸ A similar request by the next bookbinder, Johann Christiaan Ritter, was

cont. well be a pun on the end of the laborious task of copying by hand. P. A. Tiele writes that on August 14, 1668, Hendrick Brants was granted the first exclusive privilege of a printed book (*Resolutien van Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden van Indië*) for the period of three years; “Over de eerste boekdrukkers te Batavia,” *Bibliographische Adversaria* 2 (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1874). Adrien Delmas, however, maintains that in 1725, “The Council of the Indies in Batavia contemplated, for a time, the idea of having a printing machine [. . .]. The idea was soon dropped”; “From Travelling to History: An Outline of the VOC Writing System During the 17th Century,” in *Written Culture in a Colonial Context: Africa and the Americas 1500–1900*, ed. Adrien Delmas and Nigel Penn (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2012), 109. Francois Valentyn, who spent sixteen years in the East Indies, writes that the first book was printed in Jakarta in 1659, whilst a printer’s shop was established in 1667; “Beschryvinge van de Kaap der Goede Hoop met de zaaken daar toe behoorende” (Amsterdam, G. onder de Linden 1726), 413.

6 Delmas, “From Travelling to History,” 112–13.

7 Adrien Delmas, *Les Voyages de l’écrit. Culture écrite et expansion européenne à l’époque moderne essais sur la Compagnie Hollandaise des Indes Orientales* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013).

8 Western Cape Archives and Records Service (WCARS), C170, 5 Dec 1783.

rebuked in similar words in 1786, again with no explanation given.⁹ In his reply, Ritter played a careful hand. He writes that in the rapidly expanding settlement, the laborious task of writing and copying all official documents by hand is quickly becoming too much for him; rather than repeating his request for a press, he wishes to politely express a need for an assistant or otherwise an increase in pay.¹⁰ Presumably his plea fell on deaf ears, as in March 1795, Ritter wrote of his doubt that there would ever be a public press at the Cape.¹¹ Little did he know that in six months, the transfer of power to the British made room for a press.

Even without a robust print culture, important accounts were created on the Cape during the VOC period. Such manuscript diaries and letters inevitably did not yield the wide circulation of the travelogues and reports that were printed back in Europe, but they typically offer a more extensive firsthand experience and present little-explored alternatives to dominant contemporary European colonial discourse.¹² For example, a 1695 letter by Johannes Willem Grevenbroek, who had the year before retired as scribe to the Council of Policy, contains an extensive argument for the appreciation of the Indigenous peoples of the Cape as being more

- 9 WCARS, C170.166, 7 Feb 1786.
- 10 WCARS, C1301.347–49, 19 Dec 1789. Van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape in 1652 with 116 people under his command. That number had grown to 300 people by 1680 and some 1500 in 1750; Doreen E. Greig, *The Reluctant Colonists: Netherlanders abroad in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1987). On the challenges in the development of socio-cultural life at the Cape before a printing press arrived, see F. C. L. Bosman, *Drama en Toneel in Suid-Afrika, Deel 1: 1652–1855* (Amsterdam: J. H. de Bussy, 1928).
- 11 WCARS, C229.166, 12 Mar 1795. Little did Ritter know that the oldest proof of Cape print, produced the following year, would carry his name (fig. 1).
- 12 In terms of the number of copies printed, travelogues and encyclopedias on the overseas world were as popular in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe as the novel is today; Arianne Baggerman, *Een drukkend gewicht. Leven en werk van de zeventiende-eeuwse veelschrijver Simon de Vries* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993). This influx of material led to the “Echo Chamber of the Discourse of the Cape,” the term coined by J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing. On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). Also see T. A. J. Maas, “The Letter about the Khoe by J. W. Grevenbroek (1695): Watermarks, Authenticity, and the Colonial Discourse,” *Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 76, no. 1 (2022): 93–108. An initial bibliography of personal accounts from the Cape was provided by L. J. Engels, “Personal Accounts of the Cape of Good Hope Written between 1652–1715,” *Africana Notes and News* 8, no. 3 (1951): 71–100. Contrast Raymond John Howgegeo, *Encyclopedia of Exploration to 1800: A Comprehensive Reference Guide to the History and Literature of Exploration, Travel and Colonization from the Earliest Times to the Year 1800* (Potts Point, Australia: Hordern House Rare Books, 2003).

authentic than the Dutch settlers.¹³ The latter, Grevenbroek reasons, have shown themselves to be “hypocrite Christians” who follow the corrupt example of their self-enriching governor, Simon van der Stel. The Indigenous Khoe, on the other hand, by virtue of their prolonged separation from Christian centers of the world, have preserved in them a more authentic Christianity. Grevenbroek’s letter thus provides evidence of a radical inversion of the dominant pejorative view about the Khoe, indeed challenging the notion of there ever having been a single, European colonial discourse.¹⁴

In a similar vein, the 1705–1706 diary of free burgher Adam Tas is widely recognized to be an invaluable eyewitness account that throws light on one of the earliest colonial revolts by colonists against their administrator.¹⁵ Tas was a leading opponent to Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel, who—like his father, Simon van der Stel—appropriated VOC lands, slaves, and funds for his personal gain. Tas’s diary reflects one side of a controversy over the motives for the VOC’s initial refusal to remove the governor and his subsequent dismissal.¹⁶ While the controversy continues among today’s historians, there is no doubt about the diary’s authenticity, even though it is not the original manuscript. References to Tas by fellow Cape dwellers and the existence of two contemporary copies of his diary connect it to a particular time and place. Yet, this is not so evident for many other accounts. The sole extant copy of Grevenbroek’s letter, for example, is—like Tas’s diary—not the original manuscript, and its title page, which is the only place that explicitly mentions the author and a title and year of composition, was produced later and contains obvious errors.¹⁷ In cases like Grevenbroek’s letter, the document’s

13 Grevenbroek’s letter is preserved in the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), Special Collections, MSB203.

14 On the multiplicity of colonial discourse, see Maas, “The letter about the Khoe,” and Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

15 Adam Tas’s original diary, as kept by himself from day to day, is lost. As far as we know, there are in existence only two copies, both fragmentary, of parts of the original: one in the Dutch National Archives (the Hague, Colonial Archives, 4034), and one in the NLSA (Special Collections, MSB747). See Leo Fouché, ed., *The Diary of Adam Tas (1705–1706)* (Cape Town: The Van Riebeeck Society, 1970).

16 See the pioneering work by Cape historian and archivist Dan Sleight, *Die Buiteposte. VOC-buiteposte onder die Kaapse bestuur 1652–1795* (1993; Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2004).

17 T. A. J. Maas, “Authorship of a Letter about the Khoi in the National Library,” *Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 72, no. 1 (2018): 7–10. Also see

physical properties—notably its watermarks—provide clues as to a date and origin of the paper, thereby establishing its authenticity. The accuracy of such research of course greatly depends on the availability of contemporary paper samples, as well as a fairly comprehensive overview of historical paper mills, papermakers, and watermarks in a given area at a given time. The fact that the VOC curbed the establishment of a printing press at the Cape, while at the same time carefully controlling the import and distribution of paper, means that local archives potentially provide a rich database against which watermarks in personal accounts like that of Grevenbroek can be dated and mapped.

LEAVING ONE'S MARK

Filigranology, or watermark studies, is a relatively young and niche field of research, usually marked as beginning with Charles-Moïse Briquet's 1907 *Les Filigranes*, among the first to suggest the use of watermarks for dating paper. In the 1960s, the Dutch paper historian Hendrik Voorn carried out foundational work for the Netherlands, providing comprehensive lists of mills, papermakers, and watermarks from their earliest stages. In the Netherlands, as elsewhere in Europe, watermarks were added to paper as a token of quality and authenticity.¹⁸ One sheet of paper could bear two watermarks: an image used as a watermark on one half of the sheet and a countermark on the other half, typically depicting the papermaker's initials.¹⁹ With time, individual watermark designs were phased out and new ones or variations were introduced; countermarks may similarly document shifts in papermakers. By virtue of these characteristics, watermarks allow for a rough dating of the paper's manufacture and an approximation of its geographical origin, and for this reason, watermark

cont. T. A. J. Maas, "Shifting Frameworks for Understanding Otherness: The Cape Khoi in Pre-1652 European Travelogues, an Early Modern Latin Letter, and the South African Novel *Eilande* (2002)" (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2020).

18 Hendrik Voorn, *De Papiermolens in de provincie Gelderland, alsmede in Overijssel en Limburg* (Haarlem: Vereniging van Nederlandse Papier- en Kartonfabrikanten, 1985). Only in the 1830s did shadow watermarks begin to be produced, like the ones in banknotes. Watermarks at the Cape 1652–1795 are the result of copper wire mounted on a screen.

19 Geoffrey Ashall Glaister, *Encyclopedia of the Book* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2001): 119. For the Netherlands in particular, see Hendrik Voorn, *De Papiermolens in de provincie Noord-Holland* (Haarlem: De Papierwereld, 1960): 125.

studies developed as an important auxiliary to many disciplines that involve the use of physical, historical documents.²⁰

Nowadays, histories of watermarks cover the majority of mainland Europe and the United States of America.²¹ This brings to the fore the need for such overviews of the rest of the world, particularly of the southern hemisphere.²² While paper at the Cape may have been mainly imported from the Netherlands, there are marked discrepancies between the paper

- 20 Another example are the earliest depictions of the Cape Khoe on paper. When they were discovered in Cape Town, debate sparked over whether the artist had drawn to life at the Cape, or, as happened in the vast majority of cases, after encyclopedic images in Europe. Watermark research ascertained that the drawings were in all likelihood done at the Cape from paper produced between 1688 and 1700; Andrew B. Smith and Roy H. Pfeiffer, *The Khoikhoi at the Cape of Good Hope: Seventeenth-Century Drawings in the South African Library* (Cape Town: South African Library, 1993); see also Andrew B. Smith, “Dutch Artists at the Cape in the 17th and 18th Centuries, and the Development of Khoikhoi Iconography,” in *Rondom Roy: Studies opgedra aan Roy H. Pfeiffer*, ed. Chris van der Merwe et al. (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1994). The color of the paper (ranging from light blue to white to beige) is indicative of a particular area because of the quality of the rags used; Hendrik Voorn, *De Papiermolens in de provincie Zuid-Holland: alsmede in Zeeland, Utrecht, Noord-Brabant, Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe* (Wormerveer: Meijer, 1973).
- 21 Seminal studies in their respective countries or areas include: *The Briquet Album: A Miscellany on Watermarks, Supplementing Dr. Briquet’s Les Filigranes* (Hilversum, Holland: Paper Publications Society, 1952); Charles-Moïse Briquet, *Les Filigranes: Dictionnaire Historique des Marques du Papier Dès Leur Apparition vers 1282 jusqu’en 1600*, ed. Allan Stevenson (Amsterdam: Paper Publications Society, 1968); W[illiam] A[lgeron] Churchill, *Watermarks in Paper in Holland, England, France, etc., in the XVII and XVIII Centuries and their Interconnection* (Amsterdam: Menno Hertberger, 1935); *The Thomas L. Gravell Watermark Archive*, Daniel W. Mosser and Ernest Sullivan II, <https://memoryofpaper.eu/gravell/>; Edward Heawood, “Papers Used in England after 1600: II. c. 1680–1750,” *Library* 11 (1931): 466–98; Edward Heawood, *Watermarks, Mainly of the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Hilversum, Holland: Paper Publications Society, 1950); Voorn, *Noord-Holland*; Voorn, *Zuid-Holland*; Voorn, *Gelderland*. The International Association of Paper Historians provides an overview of online tools for the study of watermarks: <https://www.paperhistory.org/Links/>. Notably, Gerhard Piccard’s work is now online: *Inventory J 340, Piccard Watermark Collection*, Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, <https://www.piccard-online.de>; Briquet’s is steadily being digitized: *Briquet Online*, Laboratoire de Médiévisique Occidentale de Paris, <https://memoryofpaper.eu/briquet/BR.php>. Although still useful, Churchill and Briquet depend on a limited data set.
- 22 This void was recently also noted—and addressed for the Malay world—by Farouk Yahya and Russell Jones, “Malay Manuscripts: A Guide to Paper and Watermarks. The Collected Works of Russell Jones 1972–2015,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 49 (2021): 139–394.



Fig. 2 Initials GR for Guilhelmus Rex. Monogram under crown with gems (?) and orb with cross (orbis cruciger). Watermark: 32 × 36 mm. Western Cape Archives and Records Service (WCARS), C series: *Resolusies* 17 Jan 1736. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.

used at the Cape and those represented in Dutch paper histories, as the survey below points out. Consequently, inaccurate assumptions abound for dates, writers, and places of origin for texts. For example, a 2006 study of seals at the Cape during Dutch administration erroneously concluded that “the cipher GR under a Royal Crown seems to indicate that the paper could not have been made before the succession of George V to the throne in 1910.”²³ However, as early as 1688, one year before the inauguration of Wilhelm III as King of the Netherlands, commemorative watermarks rendered his title *Wilhelmus Rex* in its Latinised form, *Guilhelmus Rex* (GR).²⁴ Notably, this paper was also exported: from 1709, Netherlands paper with a GR mark and a crown was available on the English market, and from 1736 it was a regular countermark in paper at the Cape (fig. 2).²⁵ This not only overturns the challenge to the seal’s authenticity, but it also shows that European watermark surveys hold limited relevance for the overseas world. For the Cape, an archive that can provide such a benchmark survey is provided by the minutes of the Council of Policy.

23 Robert A. Laing, *Het Behoorlijk Zegel: Seals at the Cape during the Period of Dutch Administration. Including a Catalogue of Seals in Accession A1396 (No. 58 in the Object Register) in the Cape Town Archives Repository* (Johannesburg: Bear Facts, 2006): 100.

24 Voorn, *Noord-Holland*, 120–21.

25 All figures in the remainder of this article reproduced with kind permission of the Western Cape Archives and Records Service (WCARS), Cape Town. The watermarks were carbon-copied manually from the manuscripts with the help of a cool-light box and finally scaled down digitally by the author.

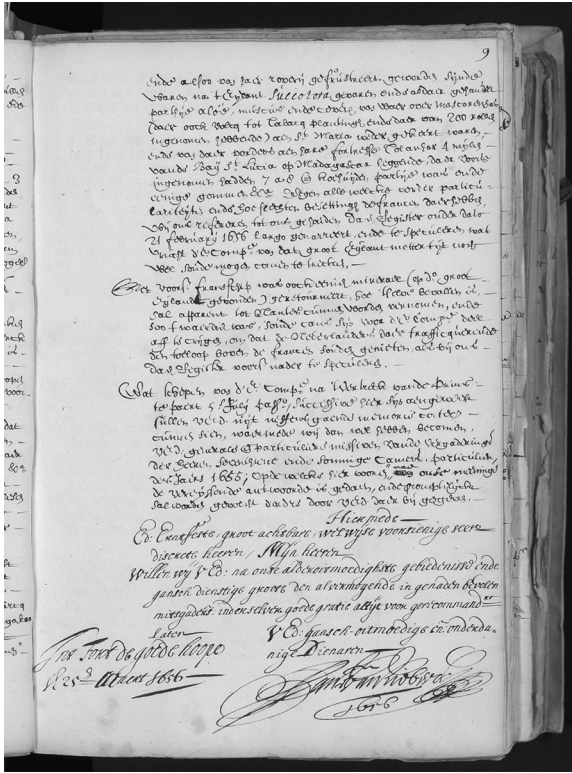


Fig. 3 Verbatim copy of *Resolusies*, to Lords XVII in Amsterdam. Sent from “Fort de Goede Hoop 25 Maart 1656” (bottom left), signed by Jan van Riebeeck (bottom right). National Archives, The Hague, VOC Archives 1.04.02, reproduced under a CC BY license.

A CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY

The *Resolusies* (Resolutions) arguably constitute the VOC’s most elaborate bookkeeping effort at the Cape.²⁶ They consist of the minutes of the Council of Policy’s weekly meetings from December 1651, when Van Riebeeck sailed from the Netherlands, until the handover of power to the English in September 1795 (fig. 3).²⁷ The *Resolusies* thus comprise a local, continuous, and consistent set of paper samples for the period of Dutch administration. The following chronological overview aims to be

- 26 WCARS, Cape Town, C-series (“*Resolusies*”). The VOC archives, including the C-series, are currently being digitized for online access.
- 27 The transition of power is marked by a sudden shift in paper. The Dutch used a rather thick, beige paper; the British brought a thin, acid-free blue writing paper.

a first survey of Cape watermarks and countermarks between 1651 and 1795, outlining major trends and pinpointing discrepancies with mainland Europe on the basis of extant surveys. Sketches of the watermarks can be found in the appendix.

Coat of Arms of Amsterdam (1651–1657)

The first entry of the *Resolusies* is dated December 30, 1651, from aboard Van Riebeeck's flagship *Drommedaris*. It had just sailed from Amsterdam with a paper stock that has the city's coat of arms as its watermark (fig. 4). Interestingly, it predates the watermark's first sample in the Netherlands domestic market by a good three years.²⁸ The overseas archive thus adds to our knowledge of watermarks in their own right.

The paper quality of this watermark in the *Resolusies* is consistent, suggesting the paper was shipped to the Cape in batches of considerable quantity, possibly produced by a single mill.²⁹ It is countermarked "PD," after the French papermaker Pierre Dexmier. This does not mean that the paper was imported from France: makers of a good quality paper commonly saw their countermark copied by other paper makers throughout Europe, oftentimes for many years after their death.³⁰

Fool's Cap (1657–1659)

Particular watermarks can oftentimes be connected to an individual governor or inspector. On March 28, 1657, Commissioner Van Goens arrived at the Cape to inspect the settlement for the Lords XVII. For the following month, the Council of Policy's minutes are first signed by Van Goens (up to now it had been Van Riebeeck). They are also written in a different hand and carry the fool's cap watermark (fig. 5). After Van Goens's departure on April 23, Van Riebeeck signs first again, the handwriting changes back to its state before Van Goens's arrival, and the coat of arms of Amsterdam

28 Voorn, *Noord-Holland*, 40, on basis of the Dutch National Archives (Nationaal Archief).

29 Alternatively, a VOC-exclusive import from France could explain its later introduction on the Netherlands domestic market.

30 The initials of the French papermaker Jean Villedary ("IV"), for example, are common in Cape Dutch-produced paper for many decades after his death. Intellectual copyrights were non-existent, and only in 1814 did Dutch legislators pass a bill that made the import of paper with copied Dutch watermarks illegal; cf. Voorn, *Noord-Holland*, 125.

returns.³¹ In line with the VOC's control over paper, the watermark proves that the report comes from Van Goens. For our purposes, the watermark links the arrival of new paper to a specific date. Indeed, more generally, the arrival of a new batch of paper at the Cape can be linked to a particular fleet. Late on February 21, 1658, the return ship *Arnhem* lowered anchor in Table Bay and sent word ahead to the Castle. The note, which is included in the *Resolusies*, carries a fool's cap with bells on either side of an embellished crook (fig. 6). From July 3, 1658, paper with the watermark from the *Arnhem* note replaces the familiar coat of arms of Amsterdam. It can thus be surmised that the *Arnhem* replenished the Castle's paper stocks with paper from the east.³²

*The Bishop's Crosier (1659–1660) and Coat of Arms
of Amsterdam (1660–1661)*

April 23, 1659, also marks a change in the administration that coincides with a change in paper: from that moment on, the Cape's second-in-command Roeloff de Man co-signs the Council's minutes with Jan van Riebeeck, and paper with the bishop's crosier (fig. 7) replaces that with the fool's cap.³³

A different design of the Amsterdam coat of arms is seen from November 10, 1660 (fig. 8). That a gradual phasing out, or period of overlap, between consecutive watermarks does not occur again suggests that

- 31 The fool's cap was among the commonest watermarks in the seventeenth century across Europe. It enjoyed great popularity in the design of Basel papermaker Hans Düring (ca. 1550). His paper never carried an additional countermark: the circles at the base of a crook were his personal mark. The motif was soon copied by papermakers across western Europe as a sign of quality, eventually becoming a stock element of the fool's cap figurine. They were copied into Dutch paper from as early as 1621; the earliest paper actually produced by Düring is only found in the Netherlands in 1629. Cf. Churchill, *Watermarks*, 11, 81.
- 32 Although the majority of paper for the Cape was imported from Europe, early modern paper trade was a global affair. The VOC regularly shipped Japanese paper, which was popular with European artists; cf. note 1 above.
- 33 De Man had already joined Van Riebeeck as his bookkeeper on January 5, 1654. I have not been able to relate the change in paper to a particular fleet. The bishop's crosier is also called "Basler staf." Cf. Voorn, *Noord-Holland*, 125; 101–2 relates the initials BB to Swiss papermaker Bartholomeus Blüm, who started business in the 1640s and is credited with designing the crosier watermark. However, the physical properties of the smooth, cream paper are too similar to that of Dutch origin to suppose a different Swiss provenance.

paper stock and its consumption were carefully monitored by the local administration.

Fool's Cap, Bis (1661–1669)

The fool's cap remains the dominant watermark for almost a decade, although variations in motifs and paper quality occur. Again, such variations typically coincide with a transfer of power, confirming that incoming governors arrive with a fresh and traceable stock of paper. It also suggests that consecutive stocks are not necessarily from the same mill (cf. figs. 5 and 6). For example, when Zacharias Wagenaer takes over from Jan van Riebeeck as governor on May 6, 1662, the balls on the fool's cap and the three Düring circles change to smaller ones. When Cornelis Quaelberg, in turn, takes over from Wagenaer on September 27, 1666, the initials along the crook disappear, reoccurring as a monogram in the countermark.

On the Netherlands domestic market, the earliest fool's cap is dated 1674.³⁴ Also, fool's cap would remain one of the less-common watermarks in lieu of more patriotic designs like the coat of arms of Amsterdam. Although the VOC had exclusive watermarks produced only from the 1730s onwards (see below), papermakers were known to produce specific paper for export markets. One might hypothesize that the fool's cap, as found at the Cape, was tailored towards such use.

Patriotism (1670–1685)

A more elaborate design of the coat of arms of Amsterdam appears from September 1670 until December 1677, followed by the Dutch lion (figs. 9 and 10).³⁵ Also, IHS (*In Hoc Signo*) occurs for the first time, both as a watermark and as a countermark to the Dutch lion (fig. 11). Patriotic watermarks such as the Dutch lion are typically related to the decades following the Eighty Years War (1568–1648) between the Dutch Republic and Spain. A Netherlands paper industry developed that diminished imports of French, Swiss, and German paper in the second half of the seventeenth century.³⁶

34 Voorn, *Noord-Holland*, 74–75.

35 The fool's cap reoccurs four more times as a seemingly inconsequential singularity on 15 Jun 1671, 13 Apr 1672 (initial PD lining the crook, no countermark), 2 Mar 1681 (countermark EP untraced), and 8 Aug 1682 (countermark EP untraced). From 21 Dec 1672 through to 31 Aug 1673, the fool's cap (countermark CG) serves as the sole watermark with no interruptions. I have not been able to relate it to a particular incoming fleet.

36 Cf. Voorn, *Noord-Holland*, 118, and Churchill, *Watermarks*, introduction.

The years 1680 to 1682 at the Cape are somewhat of an anomaly: they see a considerable variety of watermarks in a relatively short span of time. For the first time, fixed pairs of watermarks and countermarks seem altogether absent, and certain countermarks do not occur outside this period.³⁷ I have not been able to relate these brief periods of unique watermarks to a particular circumstance, nor explain them through the relative consistency of watermarks during the surrounding years, or through the recent political stability in Europe.

Strasbourg Lily (1685–1700)

The Cape's remarkable watermark consistency reoccurs when the Strasbourg lily prevails in Cape paper for the next fifteen years (fig. 12). The initials "WR" on its crook refer to the Strasbourg papermaker Wendelin Ri(c)hel (d. 1555), although associations with quality meant that they were copied throughout western Europe for over three hundred years. As a so-called pendant mark, it was used by Dutch paper makers from 1636 onward.³⁸

There are intermittent periods of IHS, paired with the (unidentified) initials MCMD.

Increased Consistency (1700–1755)

The dawn of the eighteenth century witnesses the introduction of higher quality paper at the Cape. It steadily becomes smoother and lighter, and paper margins in the *Resolusies* become wider, decreasing the number of words per page by about a third. One supposes that this is facilitated by a flourishing Dutch paper market: as it reached its golden age, availability of paper increased at generally lower prices. Gradually, also, Dutch papermakers replaced the initials of well-known foreign factors with their own.³⁹ At the Cape, signs of this are first seen in 1722—a good thirty years

37 HG, MCMD, AG, IC, IG, IM, VLDYSI. Churchill, *Watermarks*, 66 suggests IM "is described as the master paper-maker who worked at the Puy-moyen mill for Sieur Janssen"; and, 70, suggests "Villedary for Dirk and Ysbram Jansen for 'VLDYSI.'" I have not been able to identify the other initials.

38 Churchill, *Watermarks*, 12. Voorn, *Noord-Holland*, 118. The Strasbourg lily is a fleur-de-lis set in a crowned shield. It was in use until the nineteenth century throughout Europe, although it was particularly popular in Amsterdam.

39 Voorn, *Noord-Holland* uses the term "Golden Age" in reference to paper quantity as well as quality.

earlier than supposed in Dutch critical literature.⁴⁰ The famous North-Holland producers and brothers Jacob and Adriaan Cornelisz Honig add the iconic beehive pendant to their watermarks: “Honig” means honey. A Strasbourgh lily, found at the Cape, is flanked with the initials I (for Jacob) and H (fig. 13).⁴¹ From 1735, Cape paper with the Strasbourgh lily comes from their colleague Lubertus van Gerrevink. The beehive disappears, and the initials change to the initial LVG.

VOC Exclusives (1755–1795)

During the second half of the eighteenth century, personalized paper becomes popular with both individuals and businesses in Europe. As a token of authenticity, it is used alongside, or in the place of, a wax seal.⁴² Each of the VOC’s chambers was given a unique, albeit straightforward, monogram: a D for the Delft chamber, an M for Middelburg, etc. First proof of this design for the VOC can be found in the Cape minutes of 1755. The Amsterdam headquarters use a VOC crest embellished with the letter A, paired with the Strasbourgh lily (fig. 14). The papermaker’s full name serves as insignia; a countermark is uncommon.⁴³

Individual chamber monograms paired with a papermaker’s insignia are carried through to the end of the first period of Dutch administration at the Cape in 1795. Watermarks that are also in use at the domestic market are no longer found in minutes or correspondence. It is the longest uninterrupted period of use of any watermark, testifying to the watermark’s success as a way of safeguarding authenticity and to the VOC’s continued control over paper.

CONCLUSION

The absence of a printing press at the Cape during the period of Dutch administration can be connected to the VOC’s commercial interests as the largest trading company of the time and the Cape’s strategic importance as a halfway point between east and west. Furthermore, the privilege to

40 Voorn, *Noord-Holland*, 123 dates the first Honig beehive mark to 1764. Churchill, *Watermarks*, 91 had however already traced the mark back to 1700.

41 Cf. Churchill, *Watermarks*, 83–84.

42 Cf. Laing, *Het Behoorlijk Zegel*. The VOC countermark is not found on the Dutch domestic market.

43 Post horn watermarks, typical of correspondence-quality paper, are not found in these records after the seventeenth century. Letters are found as addenda to Council of Policy minutes (*Duplikaat inkomende brieven*); WCARS series C1378.

control the dispersal of information about overseas territories, and restrictive policies regarding paper aboard its ships, gave the VOC a decisive influence over early modern paper trade.

This first survey of watermarks in paper used by the VOC at the Cape has shown that paper imports were carefully monitored from the Company headquarters in Amsterdam. Batches of considerable quantity were commissioned, leading to remarkable consistency of the watermarks over extended periods of time. In the seventeenth century, watermarks and the arrival of batches of paper can be connected to individual governors or commissioners; in the eighteenth century, individual VOC chambers use exclusive watermarks. Some watermarks occur earlier or later than previously supposed on the basis of marks from mainland Europe.

The current findings from the *Resolusies* must be supplemented with other archivalia to populate a more exhaustive benchmark for the Cape and, indeed, the southern hemisphere. Repositories include the Western Cape Archives and Record Services (WCARS), where the official Cape colonial administration is archived, and the National Library of South Africa (NLSA), whose Special Collections house a variety of personal accounts from colonial times.

APPENDIX: SKETCHES OF WATERMARKS FROM THE *RESOLUSIES*



Fig. 4 Coat of arms of Amsterdam. Three Saint Andrew's crosses set in a band, on a crowned shield. The shield is held by a lion on each side, symbol of the Netherlands. The shield is topped by a two-arched crown, decorated with two clubs and a lily in center. Watermark: 70 × 65 mm. WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 30 Dec 1651. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.

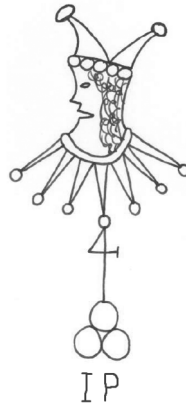


Fig. 5 Fool's cap. Two bells on taut cap, seven bells on collar, crook with three Düring circles. Initials IP under circles, unidentified. Watermark: 55 × 108 mm. No countermark. WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 12 Apr 1657. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.



Fig. 6 Variation of fool's cap. No cap. Two hands. Two bells on collar on either side of crook. Three Düring circles. Initials LC along crook, unidentified. Watermark: 62 × 120 mm. No countermark. WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 3 Jul 1658. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.

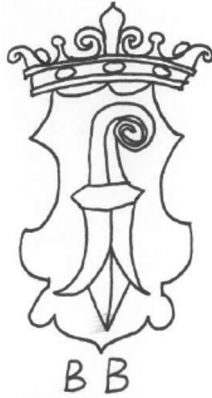


Fig. 7 Bishop's crozier. Set in a crowned shield. Initials BB at the bottom of the shield, after Swiss papermaker Bartholomeus Blüm. Watermark: 44 × 75 mm. No countermark. WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 23 Apr 1659. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.



Fig. 8 Coat of arms of Amsterdam. Three Saint Andrew's crosses set in a band, on a crowned shield. The shield is held by a lion on each side, symbol of the Netherlands. The shield is topped by a three-arched crown that is elevated above it. An orb with cross rises from the crown. Watermark: 77 × 85 mm. WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 10 Nov 1660. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.



Fig. 9 Coat of arms of Amsterdam. Three Saint Andrew's crosses set in a band, on a crowned shield. The shield is held by a lion on each side, symbol of the Netherlands. Lions have discernable paws and a body outline with the illusion of depth. The shield is topped by a crown. The cap of the crown undulates around the crown. An orb with cross rises from it. Watermark: 85 × 90 mm. WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 16 Sep 1670. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.



Fig. 10 The Dutch lion. Lion rampant, holding a sword and arrows, the latter a symbol of the united Dutch republic. The lion is set on a crowned shield with three lilies. It is captured in a round wreath. Watermark: 78 × 92 mm. WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 16 Dec 1677. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.



Fig. 11 *In Hoc Signo* (IHS). Countermark: 35 × 30 mm. There is no difference from the IHS watermark. WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 10 Feb 1673. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.



Fig. 12 Strasbourg lily. Three-banded lily set on a crowned shield. The crown is decorated symmetrically with natural elements. At the bottom of the shield is a WR pendant, after Strasbourg papermaker Wendelin Ri(c)hel. Watermark: 55 × 105 mm. WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 8 May 1686. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.



Fig. 13 Honig's iconic beehive as a pendant at the bottom of a shield. On top of the shield an elaborate nine-petalled flower crown. The beehive has Jacob Honig's initials IH at its sides. (Strasbourg lily not shown in drawing.) Watermark: 60 × 110 mm. WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 18 Jun 1730. Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.



Fig. 14 Two examples of VOC chamber of Amsterdam exclusive watermarks. VOC 16 × 13 mm, proportions of the Amsterdam monograms to that of the VOC crest. Samples from WCARS, C series: *Resolusies* 1755 (top); 1764 (bottom). Drawn by the author after the original with permission of WCARS.