

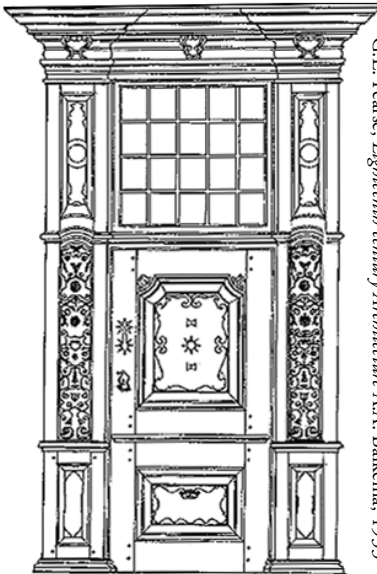
BEHIND RANGTON'S DOOR

A BALINESE WOODCARVER AT STELLENBOSCH, 1673 TO
1720

Robert C.-H. Shell

*I have lived on the lip of insanity;
wanting to know reasons,
knocking at the door.
The door opens.*

I've been knocking from the inside.
—Mevlana Jalal-e-Din Mevlavi Rumi,
Persian poet (1207 A.D. to 1273 A.D.)

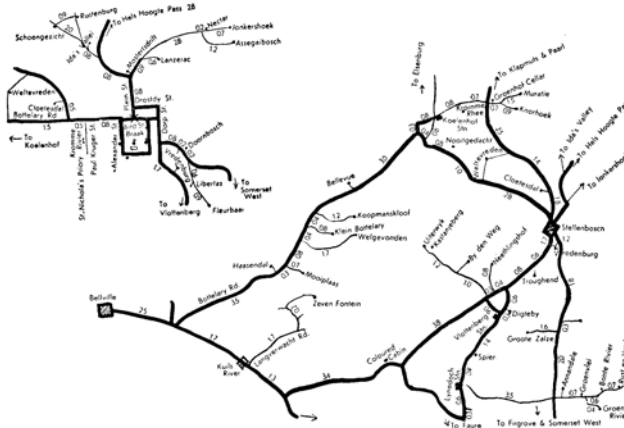


G.E. Pearse, *Eighteenth century Architecture* A.A. Balkema, 1933

Fig. 6:5:1:- Door at Elsenberg

WHEN NELSON MANDELA WALKED through the door of Groote Schuur for the first time, he might have experienced several epiphanies. To have walked out of the bleakness of Victor Verster prison and then through the grand door of Groote Schuur must have been a curious experience on its own. Many famous people went through the same door from Harold MacMillan to Mahatma Gandhi. And then there was Hendrik Verwoed, who was so repelled by black people that he had a Dutch butler as the solitary servant at Groote Schuur.

The door at Groote Schuur has always been a minor source of inspiration. Cecil John Rhodes, for example, who had a passion for collecting Cape fittings, had bought that particular door from Samuel Elsevier's old homestead, Elsenburg at Stellenbosch for Groote Schuur.¹



Map 5: 1:- Elsenburg and Stellenbosch

However, Groote Schuur with its newly transferred door had burned down. Rhodes was obliged to live in the old slave quarters on the estate until the new Groote Schuur, under Sir Herbert Baker's direction, was redesigned and rebuilt. While not everyone was happy with the redesign of Groote Schuur, everyone agreed that, at least, the new door was an excellent replica.

The unusual door nearly always gets a mention in the classic works on Cape architecture. C. de Bosdari, for example, speculates that the elaborate front door, framed between grilles of wrought iron scroll work, was perhaps executed by a "Malay slave skilled in metal work."² This is so difficult to establish. De Bosdari was the first historian to suggest vernacular origins for the door.³ Hans Fransen and Mary Cook added their note of appreciation:

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

²Bosdari, *Cape Dutch Houses*, 69.

[t]he original front door was a magnificent piece of design, with wrought iron grilles in place of the middle panels of [a] typical mid-century architrave; it also had a deeper and finer head than the average⁴



Elsenburg itself had suffered several fires. Perhaps the wrought iron work—which always survived the fires—was only a copy of an Elsenberg ur-door, delicately carved in wood by a master carver when Elsenburg was built, sometime after its original grant in 1698.

Fires at Elsenberg

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

To begin, Rangton enters history when he was born—circa 1673 on the island of Bali. From his name, one may derive that this event occurred in the northern forested slope of the Mount Batukau in a village called Rangdoe, now called Rangdu.⁶ This tiny village of five hundred souls is near to the town of Mageng in the present-day district of Bulèlèng on the northern shore of the island.

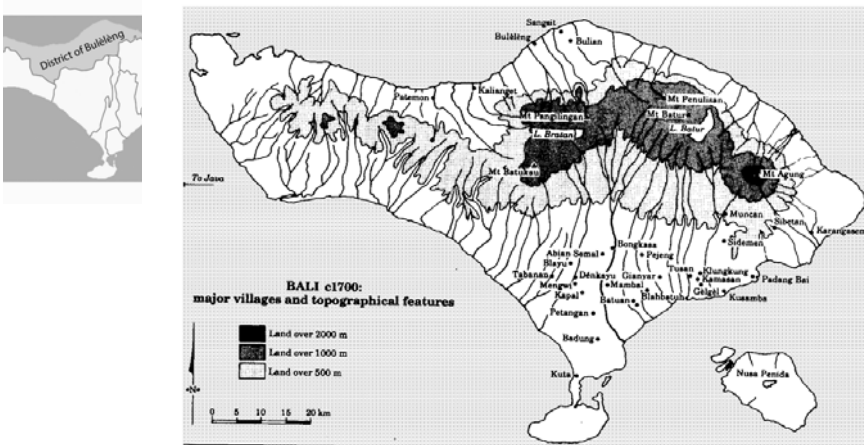


³James Deetz, the historical archaeologist has defined vernacular architecture in another way: “buildings built without architect’s plans. James Deetz and Patricia E. Scott, “Buildings, Furnishings and Social Change in Early Victorian Grahamstown,” *Social Dynamics* 16, 1 (1990): 80. However, since Groote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

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

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

⁶I am grateful to Ross Heaven of Java Nola for this information. The village is too small for Google Earth to pick it up.



We must know something of the social and cultural history of Bali to appreciate the milieu from which Rangton emerged. From the seventh century [A.D.], Bali was the resort of Indic nobility fleeing from the tumult panning across the Indonesian archipelago. The mountainous island became a concentrated reservoir of nobility from one of Asia's greatest social creations, the Hindu-Buddhist Javanese state.⁷ They introduced Sanskrit into Bali as early as the tenth century.⁸ These refugee nobles had first fled the colonial pressures of first Gujerati traders and other Muslims, and then another wave of foreigners—Portuguese Catholics. The ancient Indic nobility had migrated inland, where they established powerful highland empires based on intensive, terraced wet land rice agriculture. The sixteenth century is regarded as the brief “Golden Age” of Bali, when a single monarch held court in the southern city of Gègèl.⁹

*Balinese
reception of
Calvinism*

This rich, complex and finally, politically unified, milieu of refugee nobility and intensive agriculture first received the Calvinist Dutch led by Cornelis Houtman in 1597. Initially, Hollanders were

⁷Clifford Geertz, *Negara: the Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 14-55.

⁸J. Stephen Lansing, *The Three Worlds of Bali* (New York, 1983), pages 16-17,23,26,29,32,78,83,87.

⁹Adrian Vickers, *Bali: A Paradise Created* (Victoria: Penguin Books, 1989), page 38 ff.

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

The topography of the island is important in understanding the changes Bali underwent as a result of subsequent colonial and slaving incursions. Before 1597, the center of all political gravity was in the wooded highlands, where intensive terraced agriculture was the mainstay. A rich artisanal culture also emerged around the courts, temples and villages.

Woodcarving was a revered occupation then, and still is the principal handicraft of the island. Bali is also known for its giant Waringen trees, which are still held sacred by the Balinese. In short, wood and its human products were important aspects of the highland culture of Bali. Conceivably, Rangton was born into a highland family where such skills in wood-craft were passed on to each generation.

Balinese woodcarving

In contrast, the sea, and all that came from it, was for both the commoners and court of Bali, a source of evil. All evil spirits—*de Buta Kala*—originated from the sea and crept up onto the land. The man-eating sea god, *Batara Baruna*, especially, became associated in the minds of ordinary Balinese with the oceanic slave trade.¹⁰ The Balinese were therefore different from other Indonesian people, such as the *Orang Laut* (the people of the sea), who made their living from fishing and who were scattered all over the archipelago, some of whom also came to the Cape and became its fishermen. Whatever the Balinese aspired to it was neither the sea, nor its commerce. They associated the sea with flight, bad luck, evil spirits and a rapacious slave trade. Consequently, the lower orders and traders came to dominate the lowlands and coastal areas. There were in 1700 few ports as one can see in the accompanying

The sea as source of evil

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

map. The collective memory of the Balinese people insisted that only evil came from the sea, a point to which we will return in regarding Rangton's move to Stellenbosch. While most Cape freed slaves turned to Cape Town and fishing, Rangton, a highland Balinese woodcarver, would turn his back on the sea and go to the inland town of Stellenbosch which has a startling resemblance to the mountainous Bali.¹¹

Balinese interior forbidden to foreigners

The Balinese interior was forbidden to foreigners. Early traders who did enter the interior were obliged to stay for many years. For example, one Portuguese adventurer who arrived in 1586 was obliged to stay for eleven years in the court of Gèlgèl, with its human “cabinet of curiosities” of fifty deformed humans and dwarfs who represented to the court the outside world. Nordholt avers that it was the *pedandas*’ [priests] insistence that foreigners stay at the coast which allowed the Balinese nobility to enjoy a protracted, if ultimately permeable, independence. The Dutch East India Company did not occupy Bali for the simple reason that it was so fiercely defended. Gold-tipped spears and long range blow pipes were among the Balinese kingdoms’ most effective lines of defence as the accompanying picture of the armoured entourage of the Balinese king illustrates.



Fig. 6:5:2:- The Balinese king and his armed escort

Bali had many similarities to Holland: these included high population density—almost 300,000 people—intensive irrigation and also a high culture. Perhaps it was because of these similarities that the Dutch were so smitten by the place. In any event, they called it “the young Holland” and clearly coveted the island.¹² The Dutch established themselves in the 1840s, first in the island's north, by playing various distrustful Balinese polities against each other. The Dutch mounted large naval and ground assaults first against the Sanur region and then Denpasar. The Balinese were overwhelmed in numbers and armaments. Rather than face the humiliation of surrender, they mounted a final defensive but suicidal assault, or *puputan*—a Balinese Masada.¹³ An estimated 4,000 Balinese marched to their death against the invaders. Afterwards the Dutch governors were able to exercise little influence over the island, and local control over religion and culture generally remained intact.

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

¹²Vickers, *Bali*, page 12.

¹³<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bali> (2008.03.24).

Only after thirty crippling wars and massacres did the Dutch convincingly conquer Bali. As late as 1908 the Dutch state felt it could ignore feeble international protest from as far afield as their former colony, New York.¹⁴ Despite a prolonged Balinese sovereignty, 1597-1908, the presence of aggressive *independent* Dutch interlopers had transformed the island. There were four inter-related effects of the pre 1908 colonial intrusions. First, the demand for Balinese slaves grew as the Dutch, Chinese and Bouginese brought in trade goods—mainly opium and guns—and started exporting the descendants of the most ancient nobility of the archipelago. *Final conquest*

New autochthonous coastal trading lineages emerged whose trading, social and political aspirations were fixed on the prestigious old empire. For such a parvenu group, wealth could be obtained through slaving, while respectability could be achieved through a judicious intermarriage with the declining highland gentry. In this way, slaving wars came to Bali. Bali went through that transition—familiar to historians of pre-colonial Africa and elsewhere—when a society begins by using prisoners-of-war as slaves, and ends by going to war solely to obtain slaves. This was partly a result of the Dutch who rapidly rearranged the trade routes of the archipelago.¹⁵ The routes rendered Bali into a prestigious backwater, the main reservoir for male slave labor and also the preferred source in the archipelago for concubines. In the accompanying illustration, the proximity of the women's genitalia to the head of the Dutchman is a reversal of propriety, showing that the Europeans had low status in Balinese eyes. *Emergent trading lineages*

¹⁴Willard A. Hanna, *Bali Profile: People, Events, Circumstances, 1001-1976* (New York: American Universities Field Staff, 1976), page 92.

¹⁵Vickers, *Bali*, page 13.

Enslavement of nobility and women

Fig. 6:5:3:~ D
utch seizure of
a Balinese
woman

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

Second, a process of sub-infeudation in Bali began as raided polities sought protection from the remnants of the old kingdom. Sinews of clientage thickened as the island endured these new tensions. Third, some political power moved from the central agricultural highlands to the new trading littoral. Highland agriculture never lost its importance, but the centres of power and wealth became more diffuse. After 1622 small pockets of power could also be found on the periphery of the island. Opium, European cannon, and mercenaries—drawn from the marines of the VOC and freeburghers of nearby Batavia and some of the spice islands—helped constitute these new potent coastal lineages.¹⁶



A seventeenth century depiction of a Balinese woman shows how closely she approximated to the somatic and aesthetic norms of Europe, even classical Greece, which may have inspired the artist.

A fourth result of the colonial intrusion was the degradation of juridical morality of the island. According to contemporaries, Balinese people were sold like “hens.” The “smallest mistake, the breaking of a glass or a bottle” could result in enslavement. Even the romantic Balinese cock fights were connected with slavery. Balinese slaves, partly because of their beauty, their artisanal skills and their non-Muslim eating habits quickly became the favoured slaves of the Chinese, Dutch and Buginese throughout the archipelago.

*A main slaving
entrepôt*

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

¹⁶Nordholt, “Macht, Mensen en Middelen,” page 44.

institutionalized disorder.” Just over a hundred thousand Balinese slaves—a figure based on conservative estimates—were exported.

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

*Four classes of
Balinese slaves*

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

*The person
who probably
enslaved
Rangton*

In the following years, the Gusti hired two Dutch *shahbandars* (harbour masters). They were Messrs. Mossel and Michiel; both were “vitaly interested in Western technology”, i.e. guns. Jan Troet, a free burgher of Dutch descent born in Ambon, who regarded the king as “his elder brother” was the man who introduced Pañji Sakti to modern weapons and how to build fortifications. He was put to death in 1672 or 1673, the year of Rangton’s birth. François Valentijn, who later stayed with Troet’s widow in Ambon, immortalized Troet’s tale. The betrayal retarded Dutch slaving activity in Bali, but Chinese traders, stationed at the port of Bulèlèng—the port nearest to Rangton’s village—took up the slack. Troet’s story is important, because it was his written reports as a burgher and complaints to the VOC about Balinese slave *amuck*¹⁷ runners that led to the first VOC legislation in 1665 forbidding the ownership of Balinese slaves by all Company employees in *all* Dutch possessions.¹⁸

*Dutch
mercenaries*

Running amok According to Vickers, originally the Balinese term *amuck* (amok, a muck, a mucks) referred to the autochthonous form of warfare where leading warriors on each side would dress in white and go berserk at the head of their troops in a series of hand-to-hand skirmishes at the beginning of battle. This aristocratic show of strength and bravery was designed to intimidate the enemy. Amok running possibly also had an evolutionary purpose in that it could end a battle without the need to engage the enemy's main body of troops as in the biblical epic of David and Goliath. This practice was introduced to the Cape where its original meaning was lost. For European observers it came to mean a sort of irrational crazed and drug-induced blood lust and more recently "mental illness"¹⁹

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

If Rangton was captured in a slaving war, his lot was first to be isolated within his community and then sold to an overseas trader. We do not know how long that period was.²⁰ Another possibility exists. In seventeenth century Bali, the king

even helped put people in debt by staging large cockfights in their capitals. The passion and extravagance encouraged by this exciting sport led many peasants to bet more than they could afford ... at the end of the day ... many peasants had no home or family to return to. They—their wives and children—would [then] be sold in Java

¹⁷Vickers, Bali, page 17.

¹⁸"Nogmals Rangton;" Vickers, Bali, pages 16-18.

¹⁹Edna Bradlow, "Mental illness or a form of resistance? The case of Soera Brotto," paper presented at "Cape Slavery—and after" Conference, University of Cape Town, South Africa 10-11, August 1989.

²⁰Nordholt, "Macht, Mensen en Middelen," pages 48-49.

Be that as it may, his probable price in Bali was about 18 *Rix-dollars*, less than a third of his initial Cape price. He was then trans-shipped to Batavia either on an independent Dutch trading ship, or more probably on a Chinese junk, since it was illegal for any Dutch East India company employee to import Balinese slaves into Batavia.

That middle passage—with 200 to 300 slaves crowding a single ship—was mercifully short. Java’s southern tip is one nautical mile from Bali. Deportation from the island was the worst nightmare for a Balinese. We can only imagine what Rangton’s state of mind was at this—the end of the first phase of his life. The noble historical background of the island would suggest that his hitherto, undisturbed woodcarving life in the shadow of serene mountains must have been shattered. Despite his abrupt deracination, he would fashion a life in his new home doing much the same as he did at in Bali. This was unquestionably part of Rangton’s triumph.

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

On the 7 October 1691, he married Maria Botma, the fifteen-year old granddaughter of the first Cape free burgher,²¹ of whom he had, according to a 1698 manumission request, at least one son. He bought two ships from the Company, the fate of which we cannot trace, but which he used to service the fleets in the roads, perhaps bumboats to unload illegal slaves. It was probably through his



*Trip to
mainland*
Fig. 6:5:4:- B
alinese junk

*Rangton’s first
European
owner*

*Joppé’s
nuptials*

²¹C. Pama, comp., and de Villiers, C.C., *Geslagregisters van die ou Kaapse Families* 2 volumes (Cape Town: Balkema, 1981), page 89.

wife that he acquired the sea front property on Zee Straat in Cape Town which he sold in 1695 for 1,200 *Rixdollars*. He made his name in Cape official society by apprehending a British slaver—*The Amy*—off Saldanha Bay in 1693 while stationed on the Cape slaver, the *Tamboer*. While on the same ship, the *Tamboer*, he sold a slave, Joseph van Batavia, to Christian Freser late in the slaving season in December for a record 115 *Rixdollars*. In short, he made both his fame and fortune through the slave trade, but he did so under the burgher-friendly regime of Simon van der Stel.

*Rangton's
purchase*

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

*Smuggled out
of Bali*

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

mention the forbidden origin, namely Bali. Two other slaves sold to Samuel Elsevier by de Jonge also had their origins suppressed. Perhaps they too were from the forbidden island of Bali.

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

*An unusual
voyage to the
Cape*

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

We know little of the details of the voyage except its probable length, two months and seven days. We do know from Charles Randolph Boxer, the historian, that life on board a typical Indiaman was exceedingly rough:

*Length and
nature of
voyage*

Picturesque from the outside, they were cold, ill-ventilated and dank inside. The soldiers and sailors lived in the confined spaces between decks, where they swung their hammocks, kept their sea chests and messed together. Light and ventilation came through a few hatches and gun ports, which often had to be closed in wet or stormy weather, thus making the living quarters insufferably hot when the ship was in the tropics . . . the life of a Dutch sailor was apt to be nasty, brutish and short.

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

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

On the 7th February 1698, ten days before the arrival of the return fleet, the Cape Council of Policy wrote to Batavia that they had decided to send the *Swaag* back to Batavia. Why could they not wait for the fleet to come in, bringing despatches and news etc.? A probable explanation is that de Jonge had already made his unpopular views known or had somehow antagonized Elsevier. Unreasonably early sailing orders were a routine punishment. In any event, this decision panicked de Jonge.

On the same day, de Jonge conditionally manumitted a slave, François of the Coast [of Coromandel] who “spoke Nederlands reasonably well and who had provided faithful service.” The slave was recorded as being sold off the *Swaag*. This was no ordinary manumission, but an attempt to rid himself of a slave, for which he could not find a buyer. In the event of de Jonge’s death, the slave was to serve de Jonge’s son, for four years. On the following day, he sold a twenty-eight year old slave, Anselva van Banda to Jan Wessels, a free burgher, for 100 *Rixdollars*. One should notice the high price to a free burgher. Here he was acting as agent for N. de Vos, stationed in Japan, who was the “real” owner. Fantastically early sailing orders were both a reprimand for a skipper, but for a slave trader—who had to find a market quickly for his slaves—they were a punishment.

de Jonge
*manumits a
slave*

De Jonge survived a mutiny and went on to become a rear admiral. In that capacity he revisited the Cape in 1702 in command of the 759 ton *Kattendijk*. Again, he sold slaves off the ship, but unlike his earlier visits when he sold almost exclusively to the top Company officials, now he mostly sold to the burgher elite. He did not deal with Elsevier at all. Most of his customers were still members of the new Governor’s circle. For instance, on the 8th March, he sold the twenty-three year-old Pieter van Malabar to Claas Hendriks Diepenaauw for eighty *Rixdollars*. On the 20th of the same month, he sold the forty-year old slave, November from Cochin. But he now listed himself as a skipper of the *Waterman*, based at the Cape. He sold a forty year old slave to Guillian Heems, one of the town councillors appointed by Willem Adriaan van de Stel. On the following day he sold Mombi van Macassar to Jan Visser, a freeburgher, and also sold Caspar of Mallebar to Captain (military) Olof Bergh. Jacob Joppe de Jonge then quit the Cape.

*Admiral de
Jonge*

He is not listed in the *monsterrollen* of the following year, although the phrase “*alhier bescheiden*” would suggest that he should be listed in that source. Of de Jonge’s young wife and young son we learn nothing further. Evidently, they too did not stay at the Cape. Like another contemporary Cape slave trader, he returned to the metropole with his fortune, young wife and family.²²

²²See Robert C.-H. Shell, “Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope: 1680-1731.” New Haven: Yale University, Ph.D., 1986. 2 vols. indexed, Vol. 1 page 100 footnote 40, 208.

*Rangton's
second owner,
Samuel
Elsevier*

The *Swaag* arrived at the Cape sometime before the 10th January 1698. We know this because Jonge started selling slaves on that day. The *Swaag's* voyage was at least in part a slaving voyage, as Gerrit Schutte has correctly pointed out, since Rangton was not the only slave recorded being sold off this ship. On this 1698 oceanic trade sale transfer, Rangton was listed as being twenty-five years old and was bought for 60 *Rixdollars*, which was well under the normal price for a slave from Bali in his prime, certainly low for a skilled carpenter or cabinet maker. How do we explain this?

Samuel Elsevier was a powerful man at the Cape, the Governor-elect's right-hand man. Since Rangton died intestate and by legal default left all his goods and money to his owner's family, we need to know something about the Elsevier household as well. It is conceivable that Elsevier owed his appointment to the fact that he was married into the fabulously wealthy Six family from Amsterdam, who were also intermarried with the van der Stels and the Baxes. Perhaps it also explains the other slaves de Jonge also sold cheaply to Elsevier, Titus van Macassar, Jan van Kissen and Francis from an unknown origin, all twenty years old. These prime slaves altogether cost 200 *Rixdollars*, also well below the average. The average purchase price of all slaves sold to Elsevier was 62 *Rixdollars*, while the average purchase price of all other slaves in the same period sold to other people was seventy *Rixdollars*.

Either Elsevier was a consistent driver of good bargains, or he was using his political power to obtain slaves inexpensively by dispensing slave trading privileges in return for a slave or two. We know from an independent English captain, Matthew Loewth, that Elsevier extorted five slaves from a foreign captain for himself, twenty for the governor and five for Blesius in the same year that Rangton was bought. None of these slaves were legally recorded in the Deeds office transfers to Elsevier. Matthew Loewth complained in his log that the rest of his slaves had to be sold at such an extremely low cost "which Indeed is but giving away [sic]." We also know from other independent sources—the baptismal and manumission records—that Elsevier owned slaves for which there is no recorded transfer. Of course, he might have brought personal slaves with him from Ceylon. This was allowed but nowhere recorded. There also was no Cape system of recording ownership of slaves born in one's house. We also know that Elsevier had at least two of these. In short, Samuel Elsevier was known both for his aggressive and unscrupulous acquisition of slaves. The deeds office *transporten* reveal that Elsevier bought and sold *at least*

twenty-eight slaves. One estimate puts his labor holdings as no less than eighty men, *knechts* and slaves.²³

These acquisitive attitudes applied to landed property as well. Simon van der Stel had granted Samuel Elsevier a large farm at Stellenbosch, the famous 110 Morgen *Elsenburg* which Rangton, would in the normal course of his carpentry duties have visited. *Elsenburg* was only subdivided and sold by Elsevier's agents in 1718. An Elsevier slave was sold off the farm as late as 1721. Elsevier was, with the exception of Fiscal Boers, the most unpopular Fiscal at the Cape. Unlike Boers who exposed the corruption of the Cape burghers, Samuel Elsevier lived off his own corruption. For instance, he had boasted that in a few years the Cape could do without any freeburghers at all!²⁴

Elsenburg



He came to the Cape in 19 April 1697 on the *Ijselmonde* after years of Company experience in the East. Simon van der Stel granted him a farm almost shortly after he arrived. He soon was granted an additional town property by the Commissioner Daniël Heyns.

Willem Adriaan van der Stel expanded Elsevier’s original farm grant in 1701. Rangton therefore was one of the first slaves whom Elsevier purchased at the Cape. Rangton would have met Samuel Elsevier's daughter, Johanna Constantie Elsevier who came to play a part in Rangton's later Stellenbosch period.²⁵ She had been born in Sri

Lanka in 1685. Johanna Constantia was therefore about thirteen

²³Leo Fouché, ed., *Dagboek van Adam Tas*, page 348.

²⁴*Dictionary of South African Biography*, 3:272.

²⁵Since Rangton was a carpenter, I do not believe he was ever a household servant. Supporting this, the Elsevier household slaves were freed in 1711 *gratis*, while Rangton was obliged to pay Rds. 100.

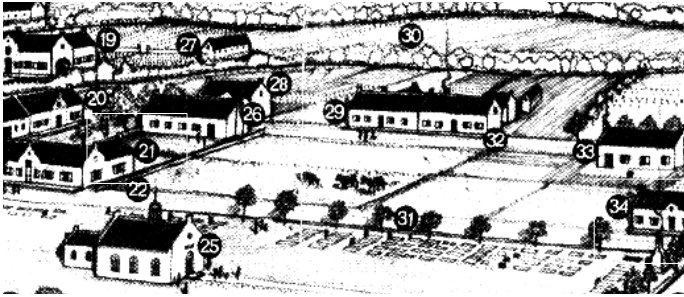
when she met Rangton. Her mother's name was Anna Maria Six de Chantelier who was supposed to have died on 4 April 1689.

Elsevier himself arrived at the Cape with his second wife, Anna Christina Mulder, whom he had married in 1691, but who died in 1699. Rangton's mistress—in the slavery sense—in his first years in the colony was therefore the young daughter, Johanna Constantie, who must have run the house until 1703 when Elsevier remarried to Maria Wasteau. This third marriage was fated to last only two years, 1703 to 1705. We do not know how it ended. Samuel Elsevier was recalled to the Netherlands in 1708 as a result of personal corruption and never returned, although he desperately wanted to stay at the Cape for “family” reasons. His plea to stay at the Cape as a free burgher was refused and he left the Cape on the 23 March 1708.²⁶ When he returned to the Netherlands he met Anna Catharina de Wildt, whom he married in 1709. She died on 21.10.1721. One of Elsevier's daughters, Johanna Constantie, who had been born in Ceylon in 1685, married the her elder Rev. Henricus Beck.

Through his expulsion, Elsevier was forced to leave his “family”—personal relatives and slaves. His sickly son, Jan Elsevier, had died in 1706. On the thirteenth of February of 1707, his twenty-two year old daughter, Johanna Constantie, had married the forty-three year old Stellenbosch church minister, Henricus Beck, Samuel Elsevier's neighbour and a plantation owner in his own right. The marriage was childless.

The Elsevier children thereafter lived as neighbours in Kerkstraat in Stellenbosch, the daughter and her husband living in the *Pastorie*. Her deceased brother had lived on the same street across the *werf*. There the Beck/Elsevier couple lived in some comfort until Stellenbosch and their church burnt down in 1711. Services had to be held in the tiny pastorie until the church could be rebuilt. Possibly Rangton would have been the most likely person to be called in from Cape Town to help rebuild after the fire.

²⁶*Dictionary of South African Biography*, s.v. “Elsevier, Samuel,” 3:272.



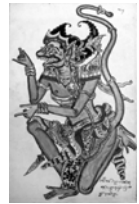
Map 5: 2:- Detail of plan of Stellenbosch in 1706

Church (25) in foreground and Ds Beck's house (21); Abraham Everts van Guinea, free black (28) Jan Elsevier (34)²⁷

Rangton stayed in Cape Town from 1698 to 1712. Astonishingly, for four years after Elsevier's expulsion Rangton had no owner *in situ* in Cape Town. Perhaps he lived a life of quasi independence in Table Valley while his absentee owner collected Rangton's earnings and that of his other slaves. There was no official record of slaves being hired out at this time.

Although Elsevier had a few of his slaves baptized, Rangton was not among them. All we may say, on the basis of the Dutch Reformed Church records is that he was not converted to Christianity or baptized, nor did Rangton ever stand as a witness in the Dutch Reformed church. There is little on his religious life. We may deduce somewhat shakily from his names that he was neither Muslim nor Christian. Arguing from his Balinese background, he was probably a Hindu. Of his personal form of worship, we can also say nothing. There is nothing in his inventories of a religious nature.

Religious life



Rangton freed himself on the 9th May 1712 at the age of 39 for 100 *Rixdollars*. We now know that this must have been decided in 1711 on the instructions of Isaac Johannes Lamotius and Jan van Hoorn, agents acting for Samuel Elsevier since Van Hoorn, a visiting Commissioner, had died in 1711. Yet Rangton's manumission document, with Van Hoorn's signature, is dated in the follow-

²⁷Leo Fouché, *Adam Tas* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1970), opposite page 16, fold-out. Reproduced by permission of the Van Riebeeck Society.

ing year. Van Hoorn must have left the date blank on the manumission deed. Four other slaves of Elsevier had been manumitted in 1711 on the same set of instructions. Rangton was the only Elsevier slave who had to pay for his freedom. Rangton's delayed manumission—relative to the household slaves of Elsevier—implied that he had to earn the manumission money between 1711 and when he was freed in the following year. One notes that the manumission price (Rds. 100) was far higher than the price (60 Rds) Elsevier had paid Jacob Joppe de Jonge in 1698.

*The right to
buy one's
freedom*

In Catholic slave societies a slave had the right of *coartación*: the right to buy one's freedom at cost. At the Cape this did not obtain in the seventeenth, eighteenth, or early nineteenth centuries. Moreover, one cannot help noticing that the money Elsevier had ceded to his two adult female household slaves—each obtained fifty *Rixdollars*—was the amount extracted from Rangton. Did Peter pay Paula?

Elsevier's Cape Town property was subdivided and sold for 5,600 Cape Guilders early in 1712. Perhaps Rangton was a resident in one of them up to their sale, perhaps helping preparing them for sale and thereby earning some money. Two Cape Town free blacks, Jantje Alem and Lampe van Batavia stood as his personal guarantors. We know little of these two people—surely friends—except that they could not sign their names. They never owned any property. Neither turned up for the auction of his effects, or rather, neither bid for anything. We can probably assume that Rangton was still living in Cape Town at the moment of his freedom. All this is shaky speculation.

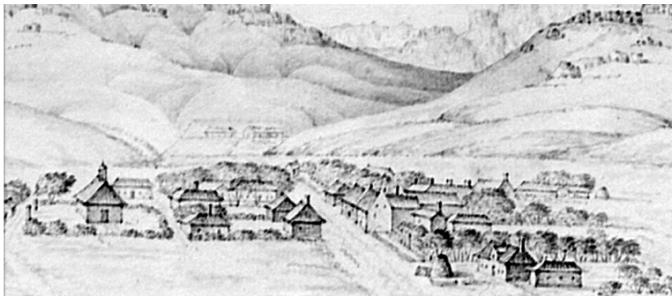


Fig. 6:5:6:- Stellenbosch in 1710
Delft: Topografische Museum, E.V. Stade

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

*Rangton’s life
in Stellenbosch*

Second, he bought a gun. Cape slaves were not allowed to own or even carry guns. His second decision could also have had several explanations. First, he might have felt that a gun was a primary symbol of freedom, or alternatively he could have been obliged to carry a gun as part of the responsibilities of freedom, or more simply, he might have felt that he needed one for personal protection in the violent, albeit tiny, colony. François van Mallebar, another contemporary free black who also died intestate, was also well armed. François owned a similar gun, a powder horn, *two* sabres and a *port-apee*.²⁸ These were items missing from Rangton’s probate documents. François’ inventory, which included *more* weapons than the bare minimum required for the militia parade, would seem to suggest that some free blacks did indulge in the purchase of deadly weapons for their own sake. After 1735 the censuses reflect that free blacks no longer own weapons. Whether this development was by decree or due to poverty and marginalization is intriguing, but beyond this paper.²⁹



Fig. 6:5:7:~
Port-apee

We know from the Stellenbosch censuses or *opgaafs* that Rangton did not buy a slave, a horse, cattle or any landed property. We also know from the receiver of land revenue books that he did not apply for a salt-collecting license, a loan farm, a hunting or a graz-

²⁸This was a strap (usually silk) to attach the sword to a belt on the body.

²⁹After 1735 the censuses record that free blacks were segregated and no longer owned weapons. ARA: VOC: 4118: Opgaaf (1 May 1732) free blacks segregated on a new page; ARA: VOC: 4126 (1 May 1735) folios 21-26, no weapons listed.

ing permit. Yet Rangton's manumission costs, his purchases and his move to another district all point to him having some money at the moment of his freedom. According to the tax lists, Rangton was in Stellenbosch in the same year as he was manumitted. Perhaps he lived for a time on Elsevier's farm or with his ex-owner's daughter, by then married to Henricus Beck, briefly the minister to both Stellenbosch and Drakenstein.

The decision to move conceivably saved his life as many Cape Town free-blacks died in the smallpox epidemic of 1713 which was brought to Cape Town by a sailor and a lodge slave washing his clothes in a Table mountain stream. After his move, Rangton appears at the back of the Stellenbosch district censuses until 1719, where he is listed with a sword and a gun, living alone. All Stellenbosch households were armed, only widows did not report weapons in these years. Rangton also appeared in the annual military parades and exercises of the Stellenbosch burghers. He paid his "lion and tiger" tax money. In short, Rangton was a "good burgher" of the *ancien regime* Cape, but that concept was nonsense if you were a freed slave. Whatever Rangton was, he was not a burgher.³⁰

His inventory

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

The document reads:

In a sealed chest

- 1 new blanket
- 1 *Caba[a]ij* [loose flowing tunic]
- 1 Moorish dress
- 1 [piece of] coastal [Coromandel] clothing
- 2 small jackets
- 1 napkin

³⁰Here, Leon Hattingh identifies Rangton as a burgher.

- 8 packs of playing cards
- 6 matching [wood]planes
- 2 small chisels, 2 axes, 1 carpenter's plumb
- 3 tobacco boxes
- Some jumble
- 1 canvas sack
- In cash [*contant*] found in the estatef429:10
- [On the following page:]
- 1 carpenter's chest with some carpenter's equipment .. }at Stellenbosch
- 1 small chest of bedding [*kooijgoed*] .. }at Cornelis Van Daalen
- All inventoried at the Cape of Good Hope on the above date
Committee of Orphan Masters
- Sr. Rousseaux
- Jer[onimus Hendrik] Snitquer³¹
- [Illegible signature]

*Rangton's
resurrection*

After this inventory, interest in Rangton's goods quicken. From Rangton's distribution account we now know that the owner, or the owner's immediate family appropriated *all* of the deceased slave's goods or personal effects.³² Against this, Gerrit Schutte asserts that the Company always claimed half of the estate in the case of the freed slave dying intestate. However, this was only rarely the case, viz. with baptized female *Company* slaves who married freeburghers, who predeceased their freed *Company* slave concubines. As can be seen from the following 1689 extract from just such a contract, the process of metamorphosis from slavery to freedom and incorporation into the settler family—so dramatic and strange to us—was carefully monitored just as any other humdrum accounting transaction:

...Andries Oelszen, free settler at Stellenbosch presently intending to marry Sara van de Caap, the Company's half-breed slave, declares that in the event of his bride's pre-deceasing him and in the event of her leaving no legal heirs, that a half of the estate, including land and movables, should be given over to the company, at the death-

³¹Jeronimus Hendrik Snitquer arrived at the Cape in 1709. He was secretary of the Orphan Chamber from 1717. He never married and he died in 1721.

³²By immediate I include “in-laws.”

house [*sterfhuijsje*], before the debts of the estate are settled, to acknowledge and pay off the Company's rôle in bringing up and feeding the above-mentioned bride...³³

Since Rangton was not in any of these categories, we should not be surprised that Schutte's cited early *plakkaat* did not apply, and could never apply to Rangton's estate for the simple reason that Rangton was never a Company slave. Subsequent legislation, namely Van Dieman's *Plakkaat* (1642) overrode Schutte's cited earlier *plakkaat*.³⁴

Rangton's inventories

A definitive answer can now be made by investigating Rangton's distribution account. Nothing at all was left to the Company, but everything devolved on Elsevier's relicts. By the time the account was drawn up in 1721, the entire amount of Rds 400 (less costs of the Orphan masters) was passed on to the minister Dominee Henricus Beck, since Elsevier's relict—Johanna Constantie—had already left. The guiding legal principle was that the slave was regarded as a minor child of the owner. If a child died, his or her goods would revert to the *pater familias* or his relations, even lateral, in-laws.

What is shocking, is that this principle applied to slaves and moreover, extended into the freed phase of a slave's life. Being a freedman, was not the same as being born a free man. Freedom and adulthood, as least as property in persons went, did not mean much. Freeblacks were still the children of bondage. Property in persons was as thick as blood in Cape law and followed the same principles of domination, descent and ownership. Perhaps we should not take seriously the *ancien regime* euphemism "*vrijswart*." Legal precision would suggest manumitted slave.

Where there is a will there is a relative goes the old Cape joke. In the case of intestate slaves the old Cape joke also works. Ten days after Rangton's death, dated from the preceding document, Johanna Constantie Elsevier—Rangton's heir—urgently asked her husband for permission to leave him and travel to Europe.³⁵ Her husband gave his

³³Cape Town: DO: Transporten en Schepenkenis (31 December, 1689) 18/90, folios 292-3.

³⁴Van der Chijs, *Plakkaatboeken*, (1642) 1: 575-6.

³⁵H.C.V. Leibbrandt, *Requesten* (no. 53. Exhibited 2nd April) 2: 413

permission in a written letter. Finally, she asked if she could take her slave Catherina van Macassar and some huge chests. She was leaving the Cape and would never return. We can only speculate as to her reasons for quitting the colony, but the timing cannot be coincidental. Her marriage had been childless and Beck had always been unpopular among the burghers because of his connections with the Elseviers. According to Adam Tas, he was quite boring and often made mistakes in his sermons. Perhaps she only wished to return to her father in Holland.

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

- 1 flintlock gun³⁶
- 1 bedstead
- 1 sealed chest
- 1 sealed carpenter’s chest³⁷
- 1 torn blanket
- 1 mattress with 2 kapok cushions, some old clothes and linen without value
- 1 small pan
- 1 bird cage [*vogelkooi*]³⁸

³⁶This had been listed in the 1719 opgaaf; the sabre had disappeared between the May of 1719 and his death

³⁷Rangton’s careful arrangement of his tools, the sorted planes, the chest of carpenter’s equipment all testify to a professional who looked after his equipment and also knew how to store tools properly. Confer *infra*.

³⁸1 *vogelkooij*. I am grateful to Prof Gerrit Schutte for going to so much trouble in correcting my mistake.

The sealed chest was opened to reveal his carpentry tools:

- 7 matching wood planes
- 1 small adze
- 1 small saw
- 2 braces [for a drill]³⁹
- 1 wooden triangle
- 1 wooden rule
- 1 oil stone [or sharpening stone]
- 1 small basket
- 1 steel vise
- 1 pair wooden measuring tools

*Rangton's
vendu roll*

The following *vendu roll*—the list of goods actually sold for the estate and a record of to whom the goods were sold—was drawn up on the 4th of May. The valuable items, a bed and a gun, had disappeared. One orphan master, Jeronimus Snitquer, who was supervising the auction himself bought most of the goods! It is only at this point in the saga that the legend “Rangton of Bali, late slave of the Mr. Elsevier” appears in the documents.⁴⁰

<i>Item</i>	<i>Buyer</i> <i>price</i>
• 1 Moorish dress.....	Zacharias Roet ⁴¹ 1.10
• 1 Coat from the Coast.....	Jan Spoor ⁴² 1.70
• 1 <i>Cabaai</i> ⁴³	
• with 1 cloth napkin.....	Bartholomeus Gulickx ⁴⁴35
• 2 small jackets.....	Snitquer ⁴⁵30
• 1 canvas sack	

³⁹2 omslagegers op een... [illegible]

⁴⁰WCARS: MOOC 10/2 no 14 (4th May 1720), no pagination in original.

⁴¹He was listed as a burgher. He sold property in Cape Town. Deed Office, no. 1665 of 1725.

⁴²Jan Spoor van Amsterdam became a freeburgher in 1715. He died in 1725. He married twice at the Cape. *Resolutions* 6 (5 August 1721): 127.

⁴³*Cabaai*: A loose flowing tunic, Malayu from Persian.

⁴⁴Possibly a relative of Helena Gulix, who had married Willem van Damme.

⁴⁵His estate is listed as selling a property in Table Valley in 1721, The Deeds Book, no. 1401.

- with 1 tobacco pouch Snitquer..... 55
- 2 tobacco cartons Steven Niel⁴⁶ 35
- 2 small chisels; 2 files; all together
- [with] 1 carpenter's plumb ... Daniel Hugo..... 6
- 6 assorted planes Jacob Paasen⁴⁷ 4
- Some jumble..... Snitquer..... 1.25
- 2 packs playing cards Frans Jans: Lintilo..... 35
- 2 packs playing cards Snitquer..... 4
- 2 packs playing cards Snitquer..... 35
- 2 packs playing cards Snitquer..... 35
- 1 empty chest..... Snitquer..... 2.0
- 1 new blanket Daniel Hugo⁴⁸ 2.5

The first item we can safely infer from Rangton's inventories is his solitude. Since most slaves imported to the Cape were male, there was a very small likelihood of normal family formation for someone like Rangton. Rangton lived alone in a single room, a stark, bachelor existence. There is nothing feminine in his inventory. In Stellenbosch, at the time that Rangton was living there, there were approximately three male slaves for every slave woman. There were also few unattached free black women in Stellenbosch, most free black women preferred Cape Town for their residence. There were thus probably several free black bachelors such as Rangton in Stellenbosch. We have no idea of Rangton's sexual preferences. Homosexual activity in Balinese society was tolerated; not so at the Cape. We can therefore make few meaningful assumptions about his sexual relations.

*Rangton's lack
of family life*

Even if there was a possibility of family formation, there was no possibility of entering a legal (i.e. Christian) marriage until 1823. In my earlier article I had speculated that Rangton might have had a woman friend on the basis of his wardrobe, but I immediately segued that by also pointing out that no woman bought any item at his auction. Since Rangton had a small practical chance of meeting a women and no possibility of securing a legal marriage, he was doomed to bachelorhood, or having 'bastard' offspring. He

⁴⁶According to de la Fontaine, “*is een oud afgeleeft man.*” Entry 135.

⁴⁷Jacob Paasen was a burgher who speculated with landed property. Cape Town: Deed Office: No. 1311 of 1719.

⁴⁸One of the Huguenots from Champagne, here about 55 years old. He died in 1725.

could have afforded a female slave, but he did not. Most imported male slaves in the early Cape could leave no “legal” issue. In such cases, property accruing to such bachelor slaves would always revert to their owners.

The high sex composition of the imported Cape slave population is puzzling. It was often four times as high as the standard Atlantic cargoes bypassing the Cape. The Cape had the highest proportion of males in any recorded slave population. Is the probate reality of Cape slaves a possible explanation? Cape owners had everything to gain—in a selfish sense—by importing as many male slaves as possible, but at huge cost to the emotional and sexual stability of their slave work force. It would seem uncharitable to claim this as the explanation of the high sex ratios, but it perhaps must be entertained.

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

In order to avoid jealousy, quarrels and murder, my master does not permit any female slaves to be kept here, but I could wish it were otherwise, as well as in other places, where I was formerly a servant. Now they [the slaves] are lonesome and solitary, and consequently slow and sluggish enough.⁴⁹

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

Slaves, even under the mildest tyrant, are bereaved of the rights of nature. The melancholy remembrance of so painful a loss is most apt to arise during the silence of the night ... what wonder then, if those who commit outrages on their liberties, should sometimes be forced to sign and seal with their blood the violated rights of mankind? Ought not my host, gentle as he was, to fear the effects of despair on twelve

⁴⁹Anders Sparrman, *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope towards the Antarctic Polar Circle around the World and to the Country of the Hottentots and the Caffres from the year 1772-1776* (ed. Vernon S. Forbes. Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society Second Series, No. 7, 1977) 1: 102-103.

stout fellows forcibly taken from their native country, their kindred, and their freedom? Is it not likewise to be dreaded, that thus shut out from the commerce of the fair sex, which sweetens life, and renders its cares supportable, their inclinations, which are extremely warm, should trespass against manhood.⁵⁰

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

Rangton’s working life

According to Leon Hattingh’s pioneering work in the Stellenbosch civil cases, Rangton had financial problems. Leon Hattingh based his judgement on one partial probate document which listed no cash. Hatting also claimed that Rangton could not find continuous employment. But this is true only as far as those recorded contracts are concerned, but does not exclude the possibility of occasional work such as he must have had on Hendrik Scheffer’s farm or on Cornelis van Daalen’s *Dwars-in-de-Weg*. We know Rangton worked for them. Yet there are no contracts. Therefore we can say that he might well have had year-round employment. The absence of contracts cannot be used as evidence that he was unemployed.

It would not have been surprising if he could not find work. There was a long depression following the smallpox epidemic of 1713 which frightened away much shipping, the mainstay of the Cape economy. But there was much building activity going on in Stellenbosch after the fire of 1711 and therefore plenty of work for carpenters. Leon Hattingh also argues that Rangton probably struggled since he took Hendrik Scheffer to court for “a trifling sum.” The point surely is that poor people rarely initiated litigation. The incident is worth telling since it reveals something of Rangton’s character. One of his employers, Hendrik Scheffer, was remiss in paying Rangton’s wages (11 guilders) and Rangton

Rangton the litigator

⁵⁰Sparrman, *Travels*, 1: 102-103.

promptly took him to court.⁵¹ The employer, however, was also his landlord, who sued him in return for six months unpaid rent (24 guilders), claiming

I do not want to short change the man, but he must pay me.

Rangton pointed out that there was no lease, and complained that the rented room was “unlockable.” Rangton liked both security and privacy. This resulted in further court appearances in 1714. The court found in Rangton's favor, a rare event for a freed slave. Leon Hattingh inadvertently terms Rangton a *burgher* at this point. From then until his death he is not visible in any documents, apart from the census, the tax lists and his contracts with the town and *pastorie*. These contracts were almost certainly due to his “family” connections with Samuel Elsevier's daughter and her husband. They would certainly be recompensed for their kindness in the final reckoning of Rangton's estate account.

We can assume both from the range of tools and from his work contracts that Rangton was a skilled carpenter. The small size of the tools (*kleijn dissel, klein zaagje*) and the number of planes suggest cabinet-making rather than carpentry. This is confirmed by the archival work of Leon Hattingh, who has unearthed all of his contracts with the Company and the church council of Stellenbosch. Hattingh claims that Rangton was the first free black to earn a living as an artisan and was much in demand. Here Rangton's patronage circle is important to remember. Dominee Henricus Beck would have seen what he could do for the ex-slave of his father-in-law. Perhaps Rangton's former mistress was the prime mover in Rangton securing employment in her husband's parish. In terms of employment, Rangton made the transition from dependent slave to independent artisan quite smoothly with only a little help from his “family.”⁵²

Rangton's social life

Third, we can infer that Rangton was fond of playing cards. He had eight packs, more than any casual player. Perhaps he entertained.

⁵¹Hendrik Scheffer van Frankfurt came to the Cape as a smith in 1705. He married Sussanah Greef in 14 May 1709, through whom he came into some property, the 59 morgen *Dekkersvlei* and was listed in Stellenbosch in 1711 as a smith and farmer: *Resolutions* (15 July, 1717) 5:180; Hoge, “Personalialia,” 356.

There are no chairs or tables in his inventory, so we can presume this was done on the floor plane of his dwelling. Judging by the frequency of Cape *Plakkaats* and *Resolutions* forbidding slaves from gambling and playing cards, Rangton was no different from other Cape slaves. Perhaps his penchant for gambling originated in the Balinese culture. Conceivably, the bird cage—mistranslated in haste by me—but caught by the eagle eye of Gerrit Schutte, was the same wicker type which Clifford Geertz claimed the Balinese kept their fighting cocks. These *vogelkoois* may still be seen today in Bali.

Perhaps cock-fighting had been part of Rangton's fate, too. We know that in the seventeenth century the Balinese kings staged elaborate cockfights in part to win slaves through gambling debts. Imported Balinese slaves in all likelihood introduced cock-fighting to the Cape. We know that cock-fighting later became a routine Sunday occupation for Cape slaves. Richard Renshaw, stationed at the Cape from 1796 to 1801, observed:

*Rangton, the
gamer*

On Sunday, they [Cape slaves] are allowed a small degree [of freedom], which they make use of to indulge in their favorite amusements, particularly cock-fighting and dancing. They have a method of arming the feet of their cocks with a sort of knife, instead of a pin, which proves destructive to one of the feathered combatants, sometimes at the first fly. Many of the slaves, who have learned trades, and are allowed by indulgent masters to make use of them to their own advantage, often bet as high as fifty dollars upon a favorite cock, instances of which I have frequently seen.⁵³

⁵²We know from Samuel Hudson that this sort of relationship of the manumitted slave to master continued until the nineteenth century: “A slave once made free seldom forgets the family to which he formerly belonged and is still considered as one of the members of that community, claims their advice and sometimes their assistance to enable him to carry on his little mercantile concerns and at New Years Day—the greatest feast of the Dutch—receives some trifling present from his master or mistress, a remembrance for his good conduct.” R. Shell, ed., Hudson, “Slaves” *Kronos* 9 (1984) page 61.

Rangton the smoker

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

Rangton's kitchen

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

Rangton's wardrobe

Rangton owned a "Moorish tunic" and another tunic which, judging from the price it fetched in the *vendu*, was a garment in reasonable condition. According to his inventory, Rangton did not own even a single pair of pants. The inventory of François van Mallebar, who was infinitely poorer, has a much wider range of clothing, viz. four pairs of pants, three shirts, one pair of socks⁵⁴ and combinations, e.g. "*hembtrok*" "*hembtrokje*" "*hembroek*" and even a tie, two hats, a pair of silver buckles and a *port-epée*. François must have made a dashing appearance with hat and tie and sword swinging from his tunic. Rangton did not have a *port-epée* in his inventories and one could therefore probably conclude that he did not carry a sword when out and about.

⁵³Richard Renshaw, *Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, the Indian Ocean, and up the Red Sea...* (Manchester: M. Wilson, 1821), page 15; The practice seems to have died out in the nineteenth century. John Mayson, *The Malays of Cape Town* (Manchester, J. Galt, 1861), page. 16.

⁵⁴Nobody has socks without shoes. We must therefore assume that shoes were not always listed in Cape inventories.

We may conclude from the comparison of these two inventories that in this period free-blacks dressed according to their own particular tastes. That these two slaves from quite different origins had such different ideas about dress, allows us to say that this pattern is at least consistent with a hypothesis that they were dressing along lines of ethnic origin. There was certainly no standardization of dress, although the authorities later tried—quite unsuccessfully—to impose Calvinist dress codes on the Cape free black women in the infamous sumptuary statutes later in the century.⁵⁵

Fashion followed origin

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

His sleeping arrangements

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

Summing up

Rangton was also unusual in that he was not browbeaten by the colonial system, or his experience of slavery. For instance, he was confident enough of his place in Stellenbosch society to initiate litigation against a quite wealthy settler. While he never purchased a house, horse or a slave (any of which he could have afforded) he established himself as a solid artisan in a colony in which, according to the Governor de la Fontaine, who ruled a few years later, most artisans found it difficult to make their way. For instance, Willem Bergman, a contemporary carpenter of European descent, could not make his way and had to take in sailors as lodgers. He was in debt in 1731. Hendrik Scheffer, the Stellenbosch blacksmith who took Rangton to court, was, according to the same

⁵⁵Robert C.-H. Shell, “De Meillon’s People of Colour: Some notes on their dress and occupations with special reference to Cape Views and Costumes: Water-colours by H. C. de Meillon in the Brenthurst Collection” (Johannesburg: Brenthurst Press, 1978) [accompanying pamphlet], pp. 8-9.

source, also in debt in 1731. In most respects, Rangton was a worldly success. That success must be weighed against a vicious colonial system which had stolen him from his island home and made him pay again for the restoration and registration of his freedom and then have his goods and money taken again when he died. Rangton's experience of slavery was short by Cape standards, few slaves were manumitted, but he died at the average age of slaves who had survived childbirth.

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

It is possible that manumitted slaves appear in similar documents, in which case we will learn even more of such fascinating persons as this gun-toting, comfort-loving, litigious, gambling wood carver from Bali, who has again won for himself some attention.



COLOUR PLATES



Indonesian Consulate, Cape Town

Fig. 7:6:8:- Balinese woodcarving



Photograph courtesy of Fiona Hinds

Fig. 7:6:9:- Balinese woodcarving (cont.)
(see page 25)



Fig. 7:6:10:- Contemporary Balinese woodcarver
(see Rangton article, page 25)



Fig. 7:6:11:- Vogelkoois in terraced Balinese landscape
(see Rangton article page 25)



Fig. 7:6:12:- Balinese door
(see Rangton article, page 1)



Fig. 7:6:13:- Balinese carving above door
(see Rangton article page 1)



Fig. 7:6:14:- Temple door in Bali
(see Rangton article, page 1)