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**Commercial Diplomacy, Cultural Encounter and Slave Resistance:
Episodes from Three VOC Slave Trading Voyages from the Cape to
Madagascar, 1760-1780**

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

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Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	iii
Introduction	1
I. Negotiation, Trade and the Rituals of Encounter: Generalised Patterns and Concrete Examples	14
II. <i>De Zon</i> and <i>De Neptunus</i> : The Predicaments of Cultural Misunderstanding and Personal Conflict	64
III. The <i>Meermin</i> and <i>De Zon</i> : Understanding the Impulses that have Shaped Shipboard Slave Uprisings	119
Conclusion	162
References	164

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Abstract

The intention of this dissertation is to fill a gap in a rich and yet under-represented aspect of Indian Ocean slave history. A number of historians have devoted their attention to the history of slave trading on the island of Madagascar; however, most of these focus on either the 17th or the 19th centuries, leaving the 18th century relatively neglected. In addition, these studies are largely in the form of historical surveys, encompassing a temporal span of many decades. Thus, my purpose has been to adopt a different approach to the study of European-initiated slave trading expeditions to Madagascar to those that have preceded it.

I have elected to found this study on a close reading of two journals from slave trading vessels that sought slaves for the Cape in Madagascar in the 1760s and the 1770s. In addition, I have incorporated material from my research on a third vessel that I completed for the purposes of my Honours degree. The first two vessels are *De Neptunus*, which sailed from 1760-1761, and *De Zon*, which sailed from 1775-1776. The third vessel is the *Meermin*, which sailed from 1765-1766. I have undertaken a close reading of the journals maintained by the merchants of *De Neptunus* and *De Zon*, so as to write a history sensitive to the daily experiences of the slave traders in Madagascar, as well as to the codes and discourse through which this experience was filtered. Regarding the *Meermin*, I have not examined its actual voyage to Madagascar as such, but have investigated a slave uprising that occurred on the vessel on its return home in 1766.

I have organised this dissertation into three chapters, systematised thematically. The first is concerned with the experience of negotiation and trading as it was recorded by the VOC merchants on the vessels, and is drawn predominantly from the first trading encounter of the crew of *De Zon* when they arrived in Madagascar in 1775. The second explores the predicaments that the European slave traders encountered on the island, predicaments that arose both from cultural misunderstandings and from personal conflict with the Malagasy. I have drawn on episodes from *De Zon* and *De Neptunus* to illustrate this theme. In the third and final chapter, I analyse the phenomenon of slave resistance on board slave ships, using a slave uprising that occurred on *De Zon* while it was still on the coast of Madagascar, and that of the

Meermin when it was approaching Cape Agulhas, as two distinct and yet mutually informative examples of this phenomenon.

In contrast to the surveys that comprise the majority of the English-language scholarship on slave trading in Madagascar, this dissertation is founded on a close reading of particular episodes, some relatively peaceful, some fraught with tension, some even violent, all of them revealing. In a sense, it is an attempt at a series of micro-narratives that illustrate and detail the historical experience of VOC-slave trading on the island at a particular juncture and from a variety of perspectives. As such, there is more of a focus on character and incident than there is on the economics and materiality of the trade; and it is in this emphasis that this study seeks to find itself a place in the scholarship on this fascinating and multi-layered cultural encounter.

University of Cape Town

Introduction

During 2004, I conducted research for the purposes of my Honours degree on a slave mutiny that occurred on the slaving vessel the *Meermin* in 1766. The *Meermin* had been transporting slaves from Madagascar to the Cape when the revolt occurred, a voyage that formed a part of a large trading network conducted by the Dutch East India Company, or VOC, between the Cape and Madagascar. For much of the 18th century the Madagascan trade provided the Company with a significant proportion of its Cape-based slave population, and slaving voyages initiated from the Cape were largely targeted towards the island. My research into the nature and dynamics of the rebellion introduced me to the world of VOC-initiated slaving ventures in Madagascar, and allowed me a glimpse of the particular trends that were present in this long-standing commercial enterprise.

The trade with Madagascar was a recurring endeavour throughout the era that the VOC was in control of the Cape, from 1652-1795. During this time voyages were commissioned on a regular basis, although there were periods of greater activity than others. Both *De Neptunus* and *De Zon* were *hoekers*, small, multipurpose vessels that could be adapted and rigged for slaving expeditions¹. One of the features of the trade that has been highlighted by scholars was its uneven, unpredictable nature. Some vessels would return with more than 200 slaves, others with as few as one or two. This unpredictability was a cause of concern and irritation to the VOC officials at the Cape, as it was, of course, to the merchants on those voyages who were unable to obtain a suitable complement of slaves. Within this range, *De Zon* achieved moderate success with 103 slaves, while *De Neptunus* returned with only 36 slaves on board. Thus, while not suffering the spectacular failures of certain other attempts, the latter certainly fell far short of what the Company would have regarded as an acceptable outcome.

While some attention has been paid to the Madagascan slave trade, it remains largely under-represented in the contemporary historical literature, both on slaving in general

¹ Haalmeijer and Vuik, *Fluiten, kitten en fregatten*, pp. 41-45. Voyages to Madagascar were usually commissioned for the purchase of rice as well as slaves, and so multipurpose vessels would have been the most suitable for this dual purpose.

and on the world of the VOC in the 18th century. While significant source material is available, both in Cape Town and in other locations, this material has, for the most part, either been neglected, or used cursorily in historical reflections that do not themselves focus specifically on the particular dynamics of Dutch-based slaving on the island. While it has been noted in a number of publications that Malagasy slaves formed a large proportion of Company slaves based at the Slave Lodge in Cape Town, and while the experience of such slaves at the Cape has been explored in some detail, the actual processes by which such slaves were acquired, the experience of the slavers in their negotiations with local royalty and dignitaries on the island and the ramifications, both commercial and human, of the trade are rich strands of slave history that demand a degree of historical attention that has heretofore not been accorded to them.

The source material referred to above consists largely of slaving journals maintained by the merchants on VOC vessels that were despatched to Madagascar for the purpose of acquiring slaves. While most of these journals for the 18th century are contained in the Netherlands, a good number, particularly for the latter half of the Dutch slaving era, are preserved at the National Archives Repository in Cape Town. These journals contain day-by-day records of the relevant voyages, as they were written by the merchants who were responsible for negotiating with local authorities and purchasing slaves. As such, they provide the best means for the contemporary historian to obtain information regarding the dynamics of the trade, both in terms of commercial imperatives and Company policy and in terms of the human element of the relationships forged between Dutch slavers and local arbitrators, and the various ways that these players negotiated such relationships.

As I mentioned, most of the journals that are available in Cape Town represent the closing periods of the Dutch slave trade. They are largely concentrated in the decades of the 1760s and the 1770s, although there are some notable examples from the late 1740s and the 1750s as well. My intention will be to examine two journals, one from the 1760s and one from the 1770s, in the hope of shedding light both on the nature and historical experience of the trade as it existed in the latter decades of the 18th century.

Much attention is accorded in the pages of these journals to the negotiations between the merchants and the local royalties and officials, to the prices agreed upon as a consequence of these negotiations and to the actual purchasing of slaves, rice and assorted provisions and supplies. As these records were compiled by merchants who occupied senior positions in the overall rank structure and who were delegated with the express task of undertaking the trading initiatives of the expeditions, they provide a rich and varied account of VOC trading experience in Madagascar in the latter half of the 18th century, and in particular of the sometimes adverse circumstances in which they were forced to accommodate their efforts. They thus comprise a unique perspective on the experience of the VOC in its trading endeavours, in both the spheres of material data and of subjective consciousness. By exploring these texts primarily as exposures of consciousness, committed to paper during distinct moments of historical time, one gains a fascinating perspective on the internal workings of European traders operating in an environment in which they not infrequently found themselves out of their depth. The complaints and fulminations of these traders, as much as the numerical and descriptive data that they were required to record, are what comprise this trading experience; and it is to these features of the texts, to the trials and the rankles committed to parchment by these often dispirited servants of the Company in the solitude of their cabins, that I will be devoting a significant amount of attention and analysis.

I will be constructing a historical narrative and interpretation based on two slave vessel journals that have been maintained in the Cape Archives. The first of these is that of the *Neptunus*, a vessel that sailed to Madagascar from 1760 to 1761, while the second is that of *De Zon*, from 1775 to 1776². While the *Neptunus* appears to have been employed for just one slave voyage, *De Zon* was used for four expeditions to Madagascar; the other occasions were in 1769-1770, 1770-1771 and 1776-1777³. Both voyages are representative of that period from 1740 to 1785 that James Ravell has located as the last major phase of VOC slaving on the island, before the Company

² The journal for *De Neptunus* is located in two volumes, C 2250 ff. 98-124 and C 2251 ff. 2-25. There are two copies of the journal for *De Zon*, spread over volumes C 2254, C 2255 (which contains a degree of repetition) and C 2256. I have consulted C 2255 ff. 88-95 and 2-87.

³ Ravell, "The VOC Slave Trade between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1795", p. 16. Ravell completed an unpublished paper on the Cape-Madagascan slave trade during the 1970s, on which I will be drawing.

deemed it necessary to explore alternatives⁴. The material gained from the records of these two voyages will be used to evoke the experiences of those involved in this venture during the 1760s and 1770s, and to use this narrative approach to examine the shifts and peculiarities in the slave trade as it is exemplified in the divergences of the experience of these slavers. The journal of *De Zon* also includes a recorded incident of slave mutiny. I will use this incident to provide a comparison with that on the *Meermin* in 1766, and examine the reasons for its related failure as well as the features of shipboard organisation, discipline and slave resistance that it reveals.

The structure that I have adopted in this dissertation is that of a close interrogation of certain key episodes from both voyages, a structure that precludes me from engaging in a comprehensive, all-encompassing narrative of each voyage. It is thus necessary to provide a brief summary here of the routes traversed by *De Neptunus* and *De Zon* as they made their way along the Madagascan coast. *De Neptunus* left the Cape on 29 August 1760, arriving back on 11 February 1761. The captain of the vessel was Hans Harmse, while the merchant who was designated to assume authority for the expedition was Johan Godfried Krause. The vessel arrived at Toulrier in the south-west on 1 October; however, they did not stop there for long, but sailed on to the Maningaaren River, where they laid anchor on 18 October. After some intermittent, not very successful trading attempts in the area, Krause grew frustrated and decided to pursue his commercial intentions elsewhere. They withdrew on 26 November, and sailed in the direction of Manembag. After contacting locals on shore on the 27th, they sailed closer to Manembag so as to trade in the vicinity of Rionaare. The following months are explored in Chapter 2; for the moment, let me say that they comprised a series of encounters characterised by a mutual acrimony and rancour. The efforts to trade here were almost completely unsuccessful; and, after Krause had determined that their labours were being wasted, *De Neptunus* sailed on 3 January and returned to the Cape with a total of 36 slaves.

The voyage of *De Zon* was to be substantially more successful than that of *De Neptunus*. It was captained by Cornelis Andriessen, and the commercial sector was overseen by two merchants, an upper-merchant and an under-merchant, Petrus

⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

Truter and Jan Paddenburg respectively. The ship set sail on 2 May 1775, and returned to the Cape on 7 January 1776. After arriving at Toulhier on 23 May, commercial arrangements were negotiated and trade was conducted until 11 June. The period spent at Toulhier is the crucial episode upon which Chapter 1 is based. *De Zon* set sail again on 12 June, and on 16 June laid anchor at Morondave. A relatively successful trade was carried out at both places; however, in negotiating with the king of Morondave Truter entered into a dispute with him that is of substantial historical interest, and thus forms, along with the sojourn of *De Neptunus* at Manembag, the core of Chapter 2. After departing on 5 August, the ship anchored in the vicinity of Mangariiek on 9 August; despite a small trade, the supply of slaves was not plentiful and on 22 August they departed once more. Arriving at Sambouwa on 23 August, they waited for a trade that had been promised them; however, when slaves failed to materialize, Truter, no doubt discomfited by this series of failed attempts, decided that any further time spent in the region would be wasted. This hasty decision to depart was no doubt as much precipitated by the slave rebellion that occurred on the vessel on 29 August as it was by the lack of commerce; and this slave rebellion is the subject of Chapter 3. They sailed on 31 August, arriving at Anpandre near the Maningaaren River on 1 September; despite the objections of one of the local officials to the quality of their trade goods, a relatively successful trade was conducted. The under-merchant, Paddenburg, died while they were anchored there, on 1 October. On 8 November, course was set once more for Toulhier, where it was hoped a final purchase of slaves could be made before their return to the Cape. After a short sojourn, from 25 November to 4 December, *De Zon* set sail for the Cape, arriving on 7 January with 103 slaves.

These elements will of necessity be largely focussed on, and reflected through, the perceptions of the merchants who maintained the journals. Thus, the discursive character of these journals is of significant import to their prominence as primary sources. The journals are composed according to a diary-like structure, in which the merchant recorded the events of each day, who he came into contact with, any negotiations that he entered into and, of course, records of actual commercial transactions. The journals would have been read by Company officials after the vessel's return to the Cape, and so, particularly in those cases where the material results of the voyage were poor, it was to the advantage of the merchant concerned to

impress upon the reader the difficulties and challenges that faced him in Madagascar, as well as to present his own performance in as favourable a light as possible. The merchants would also have been following established discursive codes when composing their journal entries, codes that would have been recognisable to, and were probably imposed by, the officials above them. This results in two key features that shape both the content and the narrative style of these records.

The first of these is that, to varying degrees, they are formulaic accounts that are intended to follow a decidedly similar narrative line; the arrival at a particular community, meeting with the locals from the shore, arrangements to convene with the local monarch, the conducting of negotiations and, finally, the purchase of a number of slaves, after which the vessel moves on to its next port of call. However, this is not to assert that these accounts are entirely identical with one another. Apart from obvious statistical differences, such as the amount of slaves purchased at a particular stop, it is due largely to the second feature, that of the merchant's attempts to portray himself in as favourable a light as possible, that the idiosyncrasies of each merchant becomes the most visible.

The narrative hand of the merchant, the way he describes the places and people he encounters, and the tone with which he depicts his interactions within the environment of western Madagascar, is most obvious in this almost polemical, didactic sense. The differences in style and tone, as well as content, between the two narrators on which this narrative depends, the merchants Krause and Truter, will become clear in the course of its telling. A recurring theme, one that will be the subject of extended authorial comment, is the relationship between, on the one hand, both the characters of the merchants and the dissimilar environments in which they found themselves, and, on the other, the manner in which they have elected to recount their particular experiences. Perhaps the most significant indicator of these dissimilarities in character, environment and, hence, in narrative style, resides in the extent to which each merchant considers himself to be an innocent, injured party, and the forms that their individual responses to such perceived injuries adopt.

It is on account of these features that one must treat the sources with a careful degree of scepticism, particularly regarding their narration of encounters between the

merchants and their Malagasy trading partners. While one is compelled by circumstance to trust that most of the events recorded in the journals did in fact occur, and are not invented, one must nevertheless seek to penetrate within the discourse of these narratives, so as to reveal, as far as it is possible, the historical situations and imperatives that shaped them. By garnering all these factors together, I will attempt to sketch something of a human portrait that will add weight to a social history of the Cape-Madagascar Slave Trade in the latter half of the 18th century.

By focussing on particular episodes from the journals of the *Neptunus* and *De Zon* I will be examining three distinct features of the trade, each of which will be devoted its own chapter. The first chapter will be concerned with the structure of trading procedures and the diplomatic culture of commercial engagement that, through successive decades of encounter, had been established between the VOC and the Malagasy by the 1760s and 1770s. The episode that is the foundation of this exploration is the commercial encounter between the merchant Truter and King Joema of Toulrier, which was the first port of call of *De Zon*. My examination will incorporate the means of exchange adhered to by the Company and the Malagasy sovereigns for the commerce in slaves, and how the commerce was facilitated through an established diplomatic paradigm; it will thus restrict itself, in the main, to an analysis of the mechanics of the trade.

In the second chapter, I will shift my attention to the nature of cultural encounter between VOC officials (primarily in the person of the merchant), and Malagasy sovereigns and officials. The perception of the merchants and the crew towards the cultures they come into contact with, their practices and the slave trade in general can be gauged from a close reading of the relative texts, and will do something to reveal the cultural markers and prejudices of the Dutch traders as they engaged in their business. The chapter will draw on material from two core episodes. In the first, I return to *De Zon*, this time at its second port of call, Morondave. In the second, I devote attention to the ultimately failed efforts of the merchant of *De Neptunus* to conduct trade with a monarch in the Manembag region, which was also this ship's second port of call. In both cases, the protagonists of these encounters fell into serious disagreements during the course of negotiations, and these moments of acrimony

provide a rich source of material from which the historian can construct a narrative of cultural encounter.

It is difficult to gain any definite vision of the experience of slaves, because they tend to remain invisible within the official records that are available. One window that does allow one a brief glimpse into the experience of the slaves, albeit through an extreme episode, is by granting particular attention to a slave revolt that occurred on *De Zon* in August 1775; and this slave revolt is the subject of my third chapter. I will examine how the revolt occurred, the circumstances that allowed it to take place, how it was subdued and the degree of ruthlessness employed by the officers in punishing the guilty parties. From this examination, I will attempt to explore the extent to which one can generalise about circumstances necessary for slave revolt, taking into account a comparative analysis of *De Zon* with the *Meermin*.

The approach that I have adopted in this work is different in structure and intent to the existing scholarship on the Madagascan slave trade that is available in English. While much of this scholarship is in the form of broad surveys with a substantial statistical component, I have elected to analyse the trade from an experiential perspective. This takes the form of a sequence of what has come to be labelled as micro-narratives, in which I take particular episodes from the two voyages, narrate their important events and then illuminate their particular dynamics from a number of angles. For this reason my study is restricted in scope, but it is simultaneously intensified in its evocation of detail and historical possibility. Much of the time I suggest possibilities rather than opine deductions; this approach is framed by the ambiguous nature of the source material, both in terms of the cultural encounters that are depicted and the discursive codes through which they are mediated. As a work of scholarship that is primarily concerned with the nature of cultural encounter as it is played out in particular contexts, this study largely refrains from attempting to draw definitive and concrete conclusions. Instead, it chooses the more rewarding trajectory of evoking the twists and turns of a constantly fluctuating cross-cultural commercial relationship, a trajectory that, by virtue of its very assumptions, is fraught with uncertainty.

A number of historical studies have been devoted to the Madagascan slave trade; however, the majority of these are historical surveys that take as their reference a

period of fifty years or more, and thus do not dedicate much attention to specific voyages. Furthermore, these works are for the most part concerned either with the 17th or the 19th centuries, leaving the 18th century relatively neglected. A number of key texts stand out, and I make frequent references to them in the body of my narrative. Firstly, there are two historical surveys completed by James Armstrong and Gwyn Campbell, focussing on the Madagascan trade in the 17th and the 19th centuries respectively and published in the Malagasy journal *Omalasy Anio*. As historical surveys, these articles include the trading activities of Dutch, English, French, Portuguese and Arab/Moorish merchants; and in the case of Campbell, whose period occurs after the Cape-based VOC had ceased to exist, there is no explicit reference to Cape-based slaving as such. These articles do provide a useful overview of slave trading on the island from the time of the first encounters with Europeans, from which one can draw comparative material. Particular incidents and trends that they highlight allow one to uncover commonalities and shifts in trading experience as it progressed from the 17th to the 18th centuries, to its culmination in the French colonisation of the island and the attendant abolishing of slavery in the 19th century.

A further attempt to devote historical attention to the trade has been the translation, in 1986, of two Dutch-based slave voyages in the late 1770s by the Cape historian Robert Ross. The first of these concerns the voyage of *De Zon* in 1776 and 1777, while the second is that of the *Jagtrust* from 1777 to 1778. Both of these voyages were, in fact, not focussed towards Madagascar as their principal destination, but rather were exploring alternatives to the Madagascan trade in Zanzibar and the Swahili coast. However, both did put in to Madagascar on their return voyage, the first to purchase slaves (due to a disastrous experience at their intended destination), and the second, after a more successful venture, to purchase provisions. Ross' commentary on the journals provides background detail as to the reasons for the VOC transferring its attentions from Madagascar to the slaving markets further north. The journals themselves are also revealing of the contrasts between the experience that the Dutch were accustomed to in Madagascar and those that they were forced to endure in the Arab and Swahili territories, and illuminate the tensions that were present in the enterprise as it entered the period of its decline.

For a general history of Madagascar, I have relied on *Madagascar Rediscovered* by Mervyn Brown, a former ambassador to Madagascar. While somewhat romanticised, this book still contains academic merit, particularly for its evocative portrayals of moments of cultural encounter between Europeans and the Malagasy during the different periods of commercial and political contact. The book is also useful in providing material on indigenous political formations on the island, although such material is, by virtue of the book's broad scope and populist orientation, not rich in substantive detail. The work's primary contribution is thus its provision of a long-term perspective, one that informs an intensive study such as this with a wide and necessary range of narrative and social minutiae. Another book that does not pertain directly to the slave trade itself is *Early Kingdoms in Madagascar 1500-1700* by Raymond Kent, a well renowned American historian and anthropologist of Madagascar. While his scholarship on early Malagasy state formation is of limited relevance to this study due to its heavy linguistic orientation and its lack of attention to the 18th century, it does contribute a few minor yet useful details on the emergence of the west Madagascan Sakalava polity of the 17th and 18th centuries.

A source that has proved to be of great worth is an unpublished paper by James J. Ravell entitled "The VOC Slave Trade between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1795". James Ravell was a South African exile who, while residing in the Netherlands during the 1970s, developed an interest in the trade and began conducting research in the hope of completing a Master's degree. Ravell died tragically before he was able to complete his research, and so a moment that would have been of great worth to scholars of Africa and slavery was lost. He did complete this preliminary paper, however, which consists of a historical overview of the slave trade which includes most, but not all, of the voyages that were despatched by the Cape (one of his omissions is, in fact, the *Neptunus*, which I will be examining in this dissertation), comments about slaving practices in the Cape and Madagascar and, of probably the greatest interest, a model of slaving practice that he derives from his reading of a good proportion of the slaving journals that are contained in the Algemeen Rijksarchief (now the Nationaal Archief) in the Hague. His model, which I discuss at relative intervals in the pages below, is similar in all its essentials to the one that I have drawn up based on my readings of similar journals in the Cape Archives.

A number of other works have also proved useful. Robert Shell, a Cape Town-based historian who has devoted significant attention to the structure and practice of slavery, as well as the formation of a slave culture at the Cape, makes a number of references to the presence of Malagasy slaves in Cape Town in his 1994 book *Children of Bondage*. While in this book he does not detail the actual slave trade as such, he does acknowledge the importance with which the Cape-based VOC authorities perceived the trade with Madagascar, and he also stresses the contribution of Malagasy slaves to the creolised slave culture that emerged in the city and its environs in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Shell has recently shifted his attention to the Cape-Madagascar slave trade itself, on which he has concentrated his characteristic statistical emphasis. The most notable example of this attempt has been an article published in the 3rd edition for 2005 of the Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa. The article, entitled “Slave Mortality on the Middle Passage to the Cape, 1658-1808”, is, as the title suggests, an examination of the mortality of slaves on VOC slavers between Madagascar and the Cape, as well as of the conditions of Malagasy prisoners before they were sold to the Dutch as slaves. As I do not include a statistical emphasis in my work, I have made only a fleeting reference to this article in this dissertation; nevertheless, the emphasis he places on physical conditions both before purchase and on the voyage to the Cape provides a unique perspective that is not present in the preceding literature.

Two other historians have made contributions that are of equal significance. The first of these is Maurice Boucher of the University of South Africa, who wrote an article in 1979 entitled “The voyage of a Cape slaver in 1742”. This article is the closest approximation to what I have attempted in this dissertation that I have encountered in the available literature. Boucher draws on the slaving journal that was maintained on the VOC hoeker *De Brak* on a voyage undertaken to Madagascar from 24 April to 23 December 1742⁵; he thus follows a similar route to that which I have adopted regarding the journals of the *Neptunus* and *De Zon*. The senior merchant on *De Brak*

⁵ *De Brak* spent most of its time at St. Augustine’s Bay/Toulour; after deciding against Masselago due to unrest, and unable to make entrance at Santa Justa Bay, a small trade was conducted at Delagoa Bay on the Mozambiquan coast. They purchased a total of 45 slaves; however, 17 of these either managed to flee or died after their purchase, leaving 19 males, six females and three children who were landed at the Cape.

was Otto Luder Hemmy, and the vessel was captained by Jacobus van der Spil⁶. The voyage lasted from 24 April 1742 to 23 December 1742. However, Boucher does not attempt a detailed analysis of cross-cultural encounter, perception and antagonism, as I have done; rather, he narrates the progress and events of the voyage with little in the way of direct authorial or historical comment. The second is Rene Barendse, a Dutch historian with an impressive body of scholarship on the trading environment of the 17th century Indian Ocean. An article he published in a collaborative study of Madagascar published by the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, “Slaving on the Malagasy Coast 1640-1700”, is similar in structure and intent to the articles by Armstrong and Campbell; and, like them, its predominant contribution to this historical interpretation has been in its provision of comparative material.

Three other works of scholarship have proved to be of invaluable importance in this effort. The first of these is Pier Larson’s book *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement: Becoming Merina in Highland Madagascar, 1770-1822*. As the title suggests, this work is devoted to the Malagasy highlands, particularly how the shifting and metamorphosing institutions of enslavement in the region during this period contributed to the formation of the Merina state in the early 19th century.

Unfortunately, the west coast of Madagascar has not been accorded a level of scholarly scrutiny that is comparable to that which is evident in this book, a handicap that has proved a minor obstruction to the intentions of this thesis. The most useful aspect of the work is its comprehensive analysis of social structures and institutions as they developed and altered in the final decades of the 18th century, and how these structures both informed, and were themselves refashioned, by innovations in slaving practice. Due to the lack of a meaningful comparative model for the west coast, I am compelled to use aspects of Larson’s work as a foundation for a number of historical speculations regarding slaving practice and its cultural ramifications in west Madagascar, speculations that are both informed and restrained by the material available in the primary sources. One can establish tentative connections, however, between the conclusions established by Larson and practices on the west coast described in both the primary documents and secondary scholarship on the region; and thus, Larson’s work serves as a guiding frame through which I attempt to locate

⁶ Boucher, ‘The voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742’, *Historia*, 24, 1, pp. 51-52.

the practice of slavery on the west coast within a structured analytical paradigm. For this purpose, I have also consulted two other works that, while concerned with slavery, do not refer directly to Madagascar. These books are *Way of Death* by Joseph Miller, and *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* by John Thornton. Both works engage primarily with the Atlantic slave trade; Miller's focuses on Angola and the Portuguese trade to Brazil, while Thornton's provides a more enlarged portrait of slave trading in west and central Africa as it incorporated all the major European powers over the course of four centuries. I have consulted these works primarily to draw comparisons in trading strategy between Madagascar and societies on the African continent, and thereby to situate local commercial practice on the island within the context of larger and more extensive patterns as they evolved and fluctuated elsewhere.

The works that I have mentioned above are, of course, representative of the scholarship available in English. A far more voluminous volume of historical and anthropological studies for the relevant period is available in French, which is in many ways the primary language for the study of Madagascar. This scholarship, unfortunately, is inaccessible to a student such as myself, who has found the primary Dutch records themselves to be enough of a linguistic challenge! For this reason, I have not incorporated the work of scholars such as J. M. Filliot and others, as valuable as this work most definitely is. Instead, practicality and expedience have dictated that I restrict myself to the more limited but still informative work available in that language with which I am the most familiar.

I

Negotiation, Trade and the Rituals of Encounter: Generalised Patterns and Concrete Examples

What separates the trading experience of *De Neptunus* most strikingly from that of *De Zon* is the relative success attained by these expeditions. While the former only succeeded in obtaining 36 slaves, the latter amassed a number of 103; such a large margin of difference is indicative of the unpredictable trading environment within which the Dutch were compelled to accommodate themselves on the coast of Madagascar. The complement of *De Zon* compares favourably with those obtained by other slaving expeditions to Madagascar in the second half of the 18th century; and while *De Neptunus* no doubt proved to be a disappointment on its arrival back at the Cape, it was by no means the only vessel to return with such a small number of slaves during this period. The reasons for this great discrepancy in procurement are multiple, and are indicative of the particular realities of slaving on the Madagascan coast, realities that shaped the often unpredictable and uneven procurement rates of slaving ventures and that were to give cause for the Company officials at the Cape to shift their attentions further north along the African coastline. While it is possible to ascertain and describe such historical realities through overarching, cursory surveys of Dutch voyages to Madagascar, the specific nature and particularities of the experience of Dutch traders are better illuminated by examining specific voyages in rigorous detail. By contrasting two such voyages where the material results were so evidently different, it is my intention to describe and elucidate the nature of the slave trade between Dutch traders and coastal Malagasy polities, and thus to reveal the fraught tensions that shaped what was ultimately an uneven, unpredictable and even tortuous trading relationship.

Perhaps the best means of introducing the functioning and experiences of what are ultimately variations of a complex and constantly altering trading relationship, is by examining the means by which the VOC organised their trading authority on board ship. Trading officials were incorporated into the rank structure, such that there was a balance of power between what one may crudely label the “maritime” and the “trading” spheres of the expedition. This is by no means to suggest that these spheres never overlapped, or that there was no meaningful interaction between the

representatives of either side of the equation. Both these voyages give abundant evidence to the frequent collaboration between the officials engaged in trade, and those delegated with the responsibility of navigating and maintaining the vessel; some of the particularly tense and challenging situations that were to be encountered by both crews will throw this collaborative relationship, itself a space of ambiguity and a certain contest for authority, into sharp relief. Nevertheless, it remains to be said that such expeditions were organised along the lines of a division of authority and responsibility, an arrangement that particularly characterises the seaborne ventures of the Dutch and that frames their dealings with the peoples and cultures with whom they came in contact. It is thus this division of authority, in which common members of the crew would come under the supervision of a different strain of officers at distinct moments in the expedition, that the foundations of the VOC slave-trading apparatus, in both its virtues and its flaws, is grounded.

The first entry in the journal of *De Neptunus* is dated 28 August 1760, the day before the ship set sail⁷. On this day, the ship was contracted for a slave trading expedition to the coast of Madagascar, under the joint authority of Captain Hans Harmse and the *Commies* Johan Godfried Krause; it was further indicated that this journal was recorded not by the Captain but by Krause who, as the so-called “*Commies*”, was to fulfil the role of ship’s merchant (an occupation that, as this voyage and that of another I will be discussing at a later point, the *Meermin*, reveals, he demonstrated a marked lack of achievement and what would ultimately prove to be a fatal ineptitude). This particular description of the relative roles of Harmse and Krause, though brief, is an apt summary of the particular division of authority that was enjoined by the VOC on trading expeditions of this kind. To extend this observation, one need look no further than the written records maintained by the Captain and the *Commies* respectively. As has been mentioned in the introduction, Krause, in this case, compiled the journal of the trading engagement of *De Neptunus* on a daily basis, while the Captain maintained a ship’s log in which he recorded winds, currents, navigational data and other maritime material.

⁷ CA C 2250, f. 100.

So where exactly did these distinct spheres of authority diverge? The historian Mike Dash, author of *Batavia's Graveyard*, an account of the wreck of the VOC vessel on an island off the west coast of Australia in 1628, provides a useful summation of the respective responsibilities of these positions in the opening pages to his book, responsibilities that were uniform across VOC vessels. The Captain was the maritime commander, responsible for overseeing the navigational aspect of the voyage⁸. The merchant's journals are silent on those periods where the captain's authority was most heavily in play. That is, on the voyages to and from Madagascar, and when the ship was sailing along the coast between particular points of call, the *Commies* had little to record; for him, it was a period of inactivity and a certain submission to the Captain's expertise. When the ship was not at shore, the *Commies* nominally deferred to the Captain; this was by no means an arbitrary delegation, as overseeing a vessel at sea required a level of technical competence and proficiency, not to mention the capacity to instil discipline and exact swift obedience, of which the merchant would, in all likelihood, have been entirely lacking. Thus, one could say that that most elemental of boundaries, between sea and land, demarcated the shift in authority between Captain and *Commies*.

With the transition from maintaining safety in an inhospitable element to operating within that to which humans were most naturally accustomed, a shift in authority and oversight was affected. Where the Captain held responsibility for the maritime aspects of the voyage, the *Commies'* obligation was that of overseeing the trading activities for which the vessel had been contracted⁹. However, the Captain and the *Commies*, who in practice deferred to each other in the manner described above, were not equal in rank and status. Dash labels him as the "upper-merchant", a term that I too will be making use of in this narrative. The captain, according to Dash, was ultimately subordinate to the person of the upper-merchant; and thus, while he was responsible for assuming authority over the maritime aspects of the voyage, a simultaneous demand was made of him to be submissive before the superior rank and status of the merchant¹⁰. This disparity in authority, while enjoining the ultimate responsibility for a particular voyage's success on one particular officer, also reflected the VOC's own

⁸ Dash, *Batavia's Graveyard*, p. 3.

⁹ Dash, *Batavia's Graveyard*, p. 4.

¹⁰ Ibid.

ambitions for trade and profit, an ambition that was thus incorporated into the very rank structure that determined the duties of its employees¹¹. However, it was when the vessel put into shore that the weight of active authority would shift most decisively from the Captain to the *Commies*. While the Captain would continue to retain responsibility for the maintenance of the vessel, and would advise the *Commies* as to weather patterns, the best opportunities for setting sail and other related issues, the *Commies* would initiate contact with locals on shore, and supervise all subsequent negotiations and purchases of slaves and provisions. In other words, it was delegated to the *Commies* to fulfil the material aims of the expedition, aims that, in these journeys and in almost all VOC-initiated voyages, were founded on the ambitions of trade and acquisition, rather than exploration purely for its own sake.

The number of such merchants appointed to a particular voyage could vary. As has been noted, on *De Neptunus* Krause, as the keeper of the log, was recorded as the *Commies* for that particular voyage, and no other such official is given mention in the text. However, in the voyage of *De Zon* fifteen years later, the initial journal entry of 1 May 1775 notes the authority of the voyage as being delegated to the Captain (or *Gesaghebber*, as is the most common usage in Dutch terminology) Cornelis Andriessen, to the 1st *Commies* Petrus Johannes Truter and the 2nd *Commies*, Jan Paddenburg¹². As becomes clear when reading the journal, the use of the term 1st and 2nd in relation to the title of *Commies* is indicative of a clear distinction in rank and authority. The journal is written by the Truter, the senior merchant and thus the complement in authority to the Captain, in the manner I have described above, while Paddenburg, as the 2nd *Commies*, was subordinate to Truter, and was assigned the particular role of assisting him and sharing in his responsibilities as trading representative of the VOC. In effect, he could be classified as the equivalent of 2nd Mate to the *Commies*, thus reflecting the relationship of authority and delegation of duty between the Captain and his senior officers.

As will become evident, the appointment of two merchant officials certainly provided for a more effective trading and negotiating apparatus than that of only one; for the task of contacting the local Malagasy royalty, of negotiating a reasonable price and

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² CA C 2255, f. 89.

then of obtaining a suitable complement of slaves was an exceedingly complicated and even risky one, in which the Dutch traders would often find themselves in adverse circumstances that were beyond their means to circumvent. In neither of these voyages were the merchants able to effect the kind of agreements and material results with which they would have been entirely satisfied; and yet, in the voyage of *De Zon*, the stresses and travails that so obviously took their toll on Krause fifteen years earlier were alleviated somewhat, by virtue of the fact that Truter was able to delegate some of his responsibilities over to Paddenburg, thus freeing his attention to the recurring task of negotiating with a culture whose conceptions of trade and fair dealing were dissimilar with those to which the Dutch were accustomed. As I will be discussing in more detail, the relative success of *De Zon* can partially be attributed to this division of labour, as well as to Truter's evident competency in the sphere of trade and negotiation, a competency that does much to highlight Krause's personal and official inadequacies.

The voyage from Cape Town to Madagascar usually took in the region of one month to complete. *De Neptunus* set sail on 29 August 1760, arriving on the coast of Madagascar about 8 miles beyond Toulhier on 1 October, having thus taken a few days beyond a month to complete the trip¹³. *De Zon* left on 2 May 1775, making better time than its predecessor to arrive off St. Augustine's Bay on 23 May¹⁴. If these periods can be taken as representative, then a voyage to Madagascar during this era in vessels such as *De Neptunus* and *De Zon* would have occupied between 20 and 35 days to complete, a substantial but certainly not inordinate amount of time spent on the open sea. The very fact that the Cape-based VOC authorities had selected Madagascar as a possible slaving location towards the end of the 17th century, and indeed that they returned there with such regularity, is precisely because voyages could be made to the island by small, fairly simple vessels in manageable periods of time.

De Neptunus and *De Zon* followed a not dissimilar route up the west coast of Madagascar from the St. Augustine's Bay/Toulhier region. The west coast of Madagascar, extending northwards from Toulhier, had been the predominant hunting ground for Cape-based VOC slavers from the 1670s, and was thus the region with

¹³ C 2250, ff. 100-102.

¹⁴ C 2255, ff. 89-90.

which such slavers were most readily acquainted¹⁵. This coastline was the most accessible to vessels approaching the Great Island from the south-west (earlier voyages in the 17th century, that had been despatched from Mauritius, had sought slaves in Antongil Bay on the north-east coastline¹⁶), and over a century of trading and slaving the VOC had established links with local royal and political bodies within the vicinity of the western shoreline. Having constructed such links and familiarised themselves with the local geographical and cultural formations, the VOC despatched the majority of its ships to this region; *De Neptunus* and *De Zon* were thus following an established trading convention, as well as logical maritime sense, in making their first call at Toulhier.

This did not mean, of course, that the ships would adopt exactly the same course once they had reached their first point of call; and the divergent routes adopted by *De Neptunus* and *De Zon* subsequent to their respective arrivals in Toulhier are indicative of the range of directions that might be adopted by VOC vessels once they had reached the island. Such variations no doubt reflect alterations in local circumstances and their effects on trading prospects, as much as that of the individual whims of the captains and the merchants. As the journals are not particularly explicit as to the reasoning upon which such decisions were grounded, one must presume that on arrival the Captain and the merchant took stock of their surroundings, and then made a decision as to which course would best enable them to realise their trading intentions. As far as these two voyages are concerned, *De Neptunus* opted to sail on up the coastline in the direction of Marendave, while *De Zon* decided to obtain their first batch of purchases from Toulhier.

Without going into any reasons for their decision, Krause records that, having arrived in the vicinity of Toulhier on 1 October, they sailed along the coast, arriving on an unspecified date at Marendave and Manembagh. However, they were unable to locate a suitable anchorage, and so they continued northwards until on 18 October they arrived at the Maningare River¹⁷. As this region was also visited by *De Zon*, it was evidently one of those localities that, having established what one may describe, albeit

¹⁵ Armstrong, 'Madagascar and the Slave Trade in the Seventeenth century', *Omalý Sy Anio*, 17-20, p. 225.

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 222-223.

¹⁷ C 2250, ff. 101-102.

with a certain reservation, as friendly relations, the Dutch returned to frequently in their trading endeavours.

Given the reticence of Krause to reflect in writing the motive of his decision to travel up the coast instead of conducting his initial transactions with the residents of Toulhier, one can only speculate as to the exterior circumstances and internal mental processes that effected such a decision. As no mention is given even of meeting with the local ruler, one must doubt whether he even took the opportunity to scout out trading prospects in the region at all. Had Krause conducted negotiations with a local authority, even if the material results had been entirely negative, he would have been duty-bound to record the proceeds of such an effort in his journal. That the region could have been uninhabited at the time of his arrival seems unlikely, as by all accounts Toulhier was an active stop for many VOC expeditions, and *De Zon* was to obtain a reasonable amount of slaves after beginning to trade on their arrival. It seems more likely that Krause and Harmse had already agreed prior to their initial arrival to initiate their enterprise further up the coast; and the rapidity with which they made their way northwards, without even a break to rest and obtain provisions, would appear to corroborate this view. It is possible that previous voyages had met with success in this region, and that it was on such information (the journals of previous voyages being made accessible to the officers of subsequent expeditions prior to their departure) that Krause thought it best to begin trading north of Toulhier. Alternatively, it is equally probable that he was acting purely on a whim, and had not given much thought at all to his decision. As will become more evident in the following pages, thoughtlessness and a propensity to act on impulse were certainly not foreign to Krause's character; and it is not impossible to suppose that he persuaded Harmse to sail up the coast on the weight of his rank and position alone, with little in the way of logical reasoning to gird his decision.

The crew of *De Neptunus* made first contact with locals in the region of the Maningare River on 19 October¹⁸. According to Krause, they were welcomed with joy by the local inhabitants, who proceeded to update them on recent political development in the region; they were under the authority of a new king, Citivanie,

¹⁸ C 2250, ff. 102-103.

who had recently won a war to establish himself as sovereign. They went on to claim that this king had long been awaiting the arrival of the Hollanders in his kingdom, and that within a short time they would be able to fill their ship with slaves and rice. The latter part of this message, that the Dutch would be able to obtain all their trading requirements from the abundance of the king's store, was an oft-repeated maxim that the traders would be subjected to at almost every locality where they chose to weigh anchor; moreover, in all such instances, this grand promise proved to be categorically false. Such promises repeatedly proved to be hollow; for while the expedition may have been able to obtain a reasonable complement from certain localities (and this was at the best of times), they found it difficult to meet their stated requirements from their combined efforts along the coast, let alone from one region. Such grand promises, when coupled with what was often an equally grand lack of delivery, were to be the cause of much irritation to the merchants on both voyages, and the reactions of the Dutch to this recurring gap between promise and provision was to lead to considerable tensions developing between the two sides. However, considering that the VOC was engaging in an established trade, one would think that the Company merchants would have become accustomed to the failure of the Malagasy to fulfil their customary grand promises. One can therefore suppose, with some justification, that the frequent expressions of irritation contained in the journals are themselves a formulaic, perhaps even expected, rhetorical device that the merchants included almost as a matter of custom. To continuously reiterate the dishonesty of the Malagasy would also serve as an attempt to absolve the merchant concerned from responsibility for a failed enterprise. Nevertheless, the different styles and intensities with which particular merchants record this sense of grievance is itself of substantial interest, to the extent that it allows one a partial view of how individual officials reacted to, and framed within an acceptable and probably widely employed discourse, their interactions within a foreign trading environment.

By stating that the king had long been awaiting the arrival of the Hollanders, the locals also gave expression to the fact that there were indeed already contacts between the VOC and the region in question. Such expressions of gratitude and anticipation are also fairly commonplace throughout both journals, and it appears to have been standard ceremony by most communities along the coast to greet the arriving European traders along similar lines. Bearing in mind that VOC vessels had been

plying their trade on a regular basis for close on a century, by 1760 (and continuing, naturally, into the mid 1770s) the local inhabitants and particularly the royalty were certainly familiar with the presence of European traders in their large ocean-going vessels, a presence of which they were evidently much in favour. Whatever violent or confrontational experiences that Europeans may have had in the initial decades of their contact with the Malagasy, by the mid to late 18th century traders such as those born by *De Neptunus* and *De Zon* were invariably provided with what approached a hero's welcome (albeit a hero's welcome in which the heroes would generally be required to pay for their expenses). It is certainly not unlikely that a good proportion of the locals encountered during a particular interaction had already been exposed to Europeans at some point in their lives; the relative regularity with which VOC ships visited this coast, coupled with the voyages mounted by representatives of other European nations, had enabled a continuous relationship to be developed with indigenous polities that, at least as far as the mutually affirmed desire to converse and trade was concerned, veered more towards amicability than towards open hostility.

While *De Neptunus* elected to sail northwards immediately upon arrival, *De Zon* chose to commence their trading at Toulhier. I will be returning to the voyage of *De Neptunus* in the second chapter, but it will be more to my purpose, in outlining the basic approach to negotiation and trade that the Dutch adopted when in Madagascar, to devote the remainder of this chapter to a close examination of the series of events that occurred subsequent to *De Zon*'s arrival in St. Augustine's Bay. The means by which they initiated negotiations and conducted their trade at Toulhier are exemplary of the means by which they did so at other places and at different times within this era, while the relative lack of difficulties and distinct challenges encountered by *De Zon* here will serve to highlight, by contrast, those that were experienced elsewhere.

Having arrived in St. Augustine's Bay on 23 May 1775 *De Zon* immediately made for Toulhier, which was three hours sail away, and dropped anchor¹⁹. After a customary gun salute, *Gesaghebber* Andriessen, *Commies* Truter and 2nd *Commies* Paddenburg went to shore in a canoe to meet with the locals. This canoe was an indigenous craft, piloted by the native Malagasy who rowed out to greet the arrival of the Dutch, and

¹⁹ CA C 2255, ff. 90-91.

who evidently invited the Captain and the two merchants to come to shore with them so that they might meet with the local officials. In most cases, when a Dutch vessel anchored off the shore it was the Malagasy who would make the initial crossing, rather than the Dutch making their way to land in one of their boats. Whether this was part of the accepted ceremony of initiating contact that had developed over the decades of interaction between the two parties, or whether it was due more to the exuberance and excitement of the Malagasy in their anticipation of favourable trading prospects, is difficult to say. As the initial meeting was almost always initiated on the part of the Malagasy, however, it does indicate the expectancy with which most of the polities reacted to the arrival of the Dutch. More than this one cannot say with any degree of certainty, as beyond recording such meetings the journals are largely silent on the matter.

Truter goes on to write that, once they had reached the shore, they were greeted by an official named Thijza and a group of islanders. Thijza is labeled with two official designations that recur throughout both journals, that of “onderkoning” and that of “makelaar”. In a later section I will be discussing the various official responsibilities and titles that are evident among the Malagasy, and relating them to comparative work undertaken by a number of scholars in the sphere of Madagascan political structure and trading practices. However, a brief glance at the duties associated with such official titles is necessary at this point.

It is of primary importance to bear in mind that the titles with which various officials are described in the journals are labels with which the Dutch found it expedient to describe them. Over the decades of their experience on the island, VOC traders had been in the position of observing how official duties were formulated and delegated among the societies with whom they came in contact; and through their own trading engagements with such societies, their interactions had enabled them to locate and specify particular officials as their primary points of contact within whatever context they found themselves. Thus, the officials with whom they interacted when negotiating with the king were often different to those with whom they dealt while undertaking actual purchases on the shore, and were thus labeled differently; although there could be overlap between different spheres of activity and officialdom, as shall be discussed. This is not of course to suggest that the officials who are referred to in

the journals were merely arbitrary locals who happened to fulfill particular roles during the negotiating process; on the contrary, it becomes clearer the more one reads these accounts that these societies had developed suitably organized patterns and structures of officialdom, and that the delegation of particular officials to interact with the Dutch was certainly not performed on an ad hoc basis. What does need to be made explicit is that the structures of authority and responsibility that are portrayed in the journals' pages are reflections of local social realities as perceived by VOC merchants, relative to terms that would have been familiar to them; they thus constitute a portrait of Malagasy social structure as constructed by their trading partners, and do not necessarily illumine such structures as they would have been understood by those internal to these societies.

To explore the designations in question, we are presented with two official titles here that usually remain separated on other descriptions. To begin with the first, "onderkoning", which can literally be translated as "under-king", is used rarely; it evidently indicates a position close to the royalty, but not of the royal power itself. It is difficult to determine whether such a figure was directly related to the sovereign or not; one would suspect that immediate relations of the king would remain within the vicinity of the capital, while it is not impossible that the "onderkoning" was related to the king in some way, even if distantly. The records are not clear on the matter, and merely mentions the term in passing.

Of far greater importance to our purposes is the use of the second term, that of "makelaar". This is a label that recurs with great frequency throughout both journals, and is used invariably to describe the official, or officials, who oversaw trading and related activities in the vicinity of the shore. One could describe them in contemporary parlance, as James Ravell does, as brokers, as those responsible for the mechanics of the trade²⁰. There are usually no references to "makelaars" at the king's residence, or indeed anywhere inland²¹; in all the frequent references that one finds of these people, their sphere of activity is almost invariably that of the beach, where they

²⁰ Ravell, "The VOC Slave Trade between Cape Town and Madagascar. 1652-1795", p. 29.

²¹ On a subsequent occasion, which I will be exploring in Chapter 2, a pair of "makelaars" accompanied Truter to an audience with the king inland, although not at his residence. However, their presence at the audience itself is heavily muted, and it would seem that their role had been merely to guide the Europeans to this predetermined location without performing any significant role in the audience itself.

interacted directly with the *Commies* and, less frequently, with the Captain. They served as the primary negotiating point between the merchants and the local Malagasy community, both in enabling the merchants to make contact with the sovereign and in facilitating the trade once an accord had been reached between the merchants and the king.

Of course, one cannot ignore the problem posed by language differences; for the Dutch officers, at most, would probably have possessed only a smattering of the Malagasy tongue. Verbal interactions between the merchants and other officers and the local Malagasy were thus facilitated by translators, referred to in local parlance as “tolken” (singular “tolk”). James Armstrong provides a brief overview of the translators in an appendage to his article on the Madagascan trade²². They were Malagasy Company slaves, who would have learnt adequate Dutch during their enforced servitude at the Cape²³. Naturally, these figures were objects of hatred to Malagasy slaves purchased on these voyages, a hatred that, as will be revealed in the third chapter, could on rare occasions lead to violent confrontation²⁴. When conferring and negotiating with the “makelaars” and other Malagasy authorities on the beach, the conversation would have been mediated through these interpreters. However, during royal audiences with the king, the journals suggest that one of the king’s officials, the Rijksbestierder, was the primary mediator of the negotiation²⁵. Whether the Rijksbestierder was equipped to provide adequate translation is impossible to say for sure, although it would seem unlikely. It is possible, however, that through interactions with European traders, such a figure could possess enough knowledge of Dutch (and maybe other European languages) to mediate the formalized dialogue that was the foundation of the royal audience. Whether the Rijksbestierder actually translated for the Dutch, or whether his role was more of a symbolic than a practical

²² According to Armstrong, some English was spoken in the St. Augustine’s Bay/Toulrier region. However, the Dutch did not wish to rely on a limited use of what was, although of European origin, still a foreign language to them, and so from 1672 they established the practice of taking translators with them on their voyages to the island. See Armstrong, ‘Madagascar and the Slave Trade in the Seventeenth century’, *Omal’Sy Anio*, 17-20, p. 232.

²³ Armstrong, ‘Madagascar and the Slave Trade in the Seventeenth century’, *Omal’Sy Anio*, 17-20, p. 232. The VOC would naturally have chosen slaves who they believed could be trusted not to flee once they were on Madagascan shores; and according to Armstrong, there are no recorded incidents of translators breaking such trust.

²⁴ Ravell, “The VOC Slave Trade between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1795”, p. 33.

²⁵ I will be devoting attention to the Rijksbestierder and his role later in this chapter; for the moment let me say that he was a senior local official, associated closely with the king and who played an integral role in the negotiations between the merchants and the monarchs.

mediation, remains something of an open question. In the case of the latter, then the VOC translators would have facilitated the discussions within an intermediary space that directly incorporated the Rijksbestierder.

Thijza certainly fulfilled both these roles much in the manner that I have described. After greeting the Dutch officials, he conducted them to a nearby dwelling; this too was a fairly common practice, and where there were dwellings available near the shore one would usually be allocated to the visitors until they had built a suitable structure of their own. He went on to inform them that the “jonge koning”, Joema, lived one hour inland, and that a messenger would be dispatched to inform the sovereign of their arrival. “Jonge koning” translates as “young king”; at this stage it is necessary to say that as with the labels used to denote Malagasy officials, and perhaps even more so, the terms used in the journals to denote respective sovereigns are not without ambiguity. Again, as it is not my intention in this section to describe and analyse local cultural structures in detail, I will not spend much time on this here, saving the majority of my comments for a later chapter. Of importance to this discussion, is that the writers used a number of terms, sometimes interchangeably, to refer to the local figure of power, and that these terms were relative to their own consciousness of royal authority derived from the historical experience of Europe. The most common terms used are those of “koning” and “vorst”, “koning” naturally translating as “king” and “vorst” being a label for “prince”. As the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, it is necessary to examine all action and detail surrounding their usage in the relevant entries to illuminate the specific contextual meanings. For example, “vorst” is sometimes used to refer to a figure who would appear to be the senior monarch, while on other occasions it is used to denote figures who are of lower rank than that of the king himself, although usually related to him, and who therefore translate more comprehensively into the conventional Western understanding of the word “prince”. The various degrees of royalty and nobility will become clearer when I examine in more detail the perceptions of Malagasy social and political formation of these two writers, based on various cultural encounters such as the one here described. Within this particular context, no indication is given at any point that a sovereign superior in rank to Joema was in existence. It can therefore be presumed that he was the supreme monarch in the Toulrier region at the time, and that the adage “jonge” is therefore intended to signify one of two possibilities. Either

Joema had recently assumed sovereign powers, in which case the expression would best be translated as “new king”; or, as seems more likely, Truter includes the reference to suggest his youth, rather than a diminutive stature in his rank.

The messenger was dispatched, and it was promised that they would receive a reply the following morning as to where they would be expected to meet the king and conduct negotiations. The officials spent the night on board ship, and on the morning of 24 May Thijza and his company rowed to the ship to inform them that the king would be traveling, with his retinue, to the beach, there to contract an agreement with them²⁶. This apparently generous gesture on behalf of the king, thus relieving the *Commies* from undertaking an overland journey, was certainly not characteristic of the sentiments of west Madagascan sovereigns as a whole. More often than not, the Dutch would be informed that they would be the ones required to undertake the journey, usually overland to his residence, there to present him with gifts (an essential component of any attempt at negotiation) and to reach an agreement as to the price to be paid for slaves, rice and provisions. Such an agreement would have to be reached before any slaves could be legally purchased, and so this royal audience was an absolutely essential component of any trading venture. It was also purely the king's prerogative to decide on the place location where this initial audience would take place; the Dutch were never in any position to compel the king to visit them at their anchorage, and it was thus only when it was the king's desire to travel, as was obviously the case with Joema, that he would undertake the journey himself (a desire that, perhaps, was sometimes motivated by a desire to gain firsthand experience of the visitor's vessel). It was certainly not unheard of for a king to travel some distance surrounded by his entourage; Maurice Boucher, in his description of *De Brak*'s voyage to Madagascar in 1742, recounts how King Ramanrasse, an earlier potentate in the Toulrier region, moved his entire court to St. Augustine's Bay for two weeks²⁷. It would thus not have been considered unusual for King Joema to travel a moderate distance with his court to contract a trade; it was a decision, however, that was made on his own account, and was not pre-empted by any action on the part of his trading partners. In all the relevant entries from both journals, the Dutch are recorded as being

²⁶ C 2255, ff. 91-93.

²⁷ Boucher, 'The Voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742', *Historia*, 24, 1, p. 55.

required to wait for the king's stipulation as to where and when they would meet, and then to comply with it.

One further feature of this arrangement needs to be noted, and that is that all the kings that figure in these accounts maintained their residences at a point inland from the shore. While perhaps there is nothing unduly remarkable about this, it does mean that a journey of some length, often taking at least a couple of days, was necessary in order to contract an agreement. As it was usually the *Commies* who would be required to make the journey, and because no meaningful trade could commence until the negotiations had been concluded, this facet of the experience would be the cause of much chagrin to the merchants, who would vent their frustrations in ink on the pages of their journals.

Once they had been informed that the king would be traveling to meet them, the two merchants went to shore again, this time in what they call the '*schuijt*', one of their own light craft which would be regularly used to ply the waters between the ship and the beach²⁸. Their purpose in going ashore was to select an appropriate location to construct a Factory ("Factorij" in the Dutch), a structure that would serve as a base from which they would conduct their trading operations. The Dutch constructed such buildings at almost every stop they made; the only exceptions were those localities where, after an initial observation, they deemed trading prospects to be unpromising and not worth more than a few days of their time. The Factory was also never intended to be a permanent structure, and was usually disassembled on departure; it was also constructed cheaply and quickly, using local labour and paid for out of the ship's stores. In Boucher's account, the Factory built at Toulhier for the use of *De Brak* included a guard-house, kitchen, hospital and surgeon's dwelling²⁹; while no such description exists in the journals of either *De Neptunus* or *De Zon*, it is probable that the Factory built here, and elsewhere where trade was deemed to be suitably vigorous, contained at least some of these features. They certainly would have included either an open space or a roughly enclosed room of some kind, where the actual slave purchasing would have occurred according to the agreement arrived at between the

²⁸ Most *hoekers* had two boats stowed on board for this purpose; usually, the first is labelled the *schuijt*, and the second the *boot*.

²⁹ Boucher, 'The Voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742', *Historia*, 24, 1, p. 54.

merchants and the king. Purchased slaves were never maintained here for long; however; they would be safely secured until the close of day and then transported in one of the ship's boats to the vessel, where they would be chained in a crowded holding chamber below decks.

After locating a suitable place for the construction of the Factory, the *Commissies* arranged for the purchasing of some provisions. Naturally, the visitors bought foodstuffs on a regular basis, usually every two or three days; the fact that they were required, whether by necessity or tacit agreement, to purchase such essentials from the Malagasy rather than collecting and foraging for them themselves, reinforces one's notion, confirmed through other examples and indeed by the entire trading procedure, of the dependence of the Dutch on the goodwill of their hosts. It was obviously to the Malagasy's material benefit to ensure that the Dutch were compelled to purchase their provisions from them in an organized fashion, and it was most probably simply convenient for the Dutch to reciprocate; what this illuminates is the fact that the Dutch were traders in a symbiotic and heavily dependent relationship with their trading partners, and in no way resembled the self-sufficient raiding parties that still populate the contemporary collective imagination of slaving. In this way they diverged from other European interlopers on the island, such as the much-romanticized pirates for whom the Great Island is famed³⁰.

The provisions that were purchased on 24 May 1775 are representative of those bought on other occasions, and there is little reason to spend much time analyzing this facet of the expedition in detail. For 1 piece "guinees bruijn blauw" they obtained one cow, thus ensuring meat rations for the next couple of days. They also purchased a supply of vegetables ("een parthij groente"), 8 "madjes pattattes" (sweet potatoes), 25 eggs, 200 lemons, 6 chickens and 2 pots of milk. For this they parted with 4 dozen knives ("douzijn"), 1 dozen "zak spiegels", 3 pounds "pijp coraalen" (beads), 2 pounds "guispel coraalen", 5 "musquet kogels" (musket balls), 75 pieces "snaphaan steenen" and 400 pieces "stale naalden". At this stage they had not yet acquired any slaves, and so these items were intended purely for the replenishment of the crew.

³⁰ Mervyn Brown recounts how many of the pirates of the Indian Ocean during the 17th and 18th centuries based themselves in hideouts in Madagascar. For information on the pirates and their cultural influence of Madagascar, see Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, pp. 72-109.

When slaves did begin to arrive, more provisions would have to be purchased for their consumption; however, as is to be expected, the slaves did not eat as well as the officers and crew, and were mostly forced to subsist on little more than rice³¹. It is also important to take note of the items that were bartered for these provisions. In the main, it would appear that on this occasion the Malagasy accepted knives, ammunition and beads as an acceptable exchange. Anything related to arms and ammunition was always popular along the Madagascan coast, and so it is natural that the locals would have accepted a regular supply of ammunition in exchange for their foodstuffs. Beads were also a longtime item of exchange, especially in the earlier decades of trade on the island, but towards the end of the 18th century were going something out of fashion, leading to trading difficulties elsewhere in the voyage³². However, for provisions if not always for slaves, the local suppliers still accepted foreign beads, an item that held value primarily as a novelty and as a decorative article. Such goods would have been transported ashore in the ship's boats, and the foodstuffs conducted back to the vessel for the replenishment of the crew.

In view of the imminent arrival of King Joema, after obtaining these provisions the merchants immediately set to work in preparing suitable presents to be granted to the king and his close associates. Selecting appropriate and, even more crucially, substantial gifts, was absolute standard procedure of any trading venture on the island and was repeated at every stop made by both vessels along the coast. Without acceptable gifts, no monarch would have been willing to negotiate and to allow any trade to proceed, and so this bestowing of presents was as much a ceremonial as it was a material exchange. The "makelaars" would invariably inspect the gifts before they were to be presented, to ensure that they would meet with the king's approval. While the king did not necessarily grant his own gifts in return (although there are occasions when the monarch, both after the initial audience and at later stages in the trade, would present the Dutch with one or two cows and sometimes other foodstuffs as gifts³³), it can be supposed that the granting of trade rights for the duration of their stay was what constituted his gesture of reciprocation. As the monarch and his people would also profit materially from the initiation of trade, it can be stated with some

³¹ Boucher, 'The Voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742', *Historia*, 24, 1, p. 52.

³² I will be discussing trade goods later in this chapter.

³³ For instance, when Truter later met with the king of Morondave on 7 July, the king presented them with two sheep as a gift. I will be discussing this encounter in Chapter 2. See CA C 2255, ff. 17-20.

accuracy that he benefited both ways from this arrangement. The Dutch were as dependent and in fact governed by local conditions in this respect as they were in so many others; had they been unwilling to grant suitable gifts to the local monarch, they would either have been unable to obtain slaves or to attempt to engage in a clandestine trade, which would have brought additional attendant dangers. As it was, this arrangement had evolved over decades of trading; what one is witness to here is the accommodation of the VOC expeditions within a system of trading conventions with which they were now well familiar, and which for the purposes of expediency and maximum gain they chose to sustain.

On this occasion, it was decided to present gifts to King Joema, to his three sisters and to the Rijksbestierder, Rijgigo. The presents demarcated for these three persons/groups of persons were certainly of a substantial quantity. The king, naturally, was to receive the bulk of the gifts; to him was marked out 26 items or collections of items, including a “snaphaan”, gunpowder and shells, as well as a variety of utensils such as spoons, plates and pots. His 3 sisters were granted 9 items or collections of items, generally of a more domestic and decorative function; they received 3 u “pijp coraalen” (interestingly, the king did not receive any beads, while his senior official, the Rijksbestierder, did), soap, “gaaren” and an assortment of other goods, as well as 3 dozen knives. The Rijksbestierder received 16 items or collections of items; barring the assortment of beads, his allocation was in many respects similar to that of the king’s, with a “snaphaan”, ammunition and assorted utensils. He also received 20 cans of “arak”, a gesture that he no doubt received with much delight. Arms and alcohol would comprise a substantial bulk of the goods traded for slaves on both voyages, and a number of incidents in both these journals and in Boucher’s narrative indicate the partiality of the Malagasy towards imported liquor, a partiality that they naturally shared with many of those other African and non-European societies that had come into contact with European traders³⁴.

The granting of gifts was evidently a matter of crucial importance to the formalities of trade, so much so that on no occasion could a trade agreement be formalized without

³⁴ Boucher, ‘The Voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742’, *Historia*, 24, 1, p. 55. He quotes Hemmy’s irritation with the vast amount of the ship’s liquor that was consumed by the Malagasy, who clearly perceived it as a considerable and wasteful expense.

the ceremony's inclusion. The historical significance as well as the longevity of this practice on the west coast can be observed when examining the 19th century trade; for then, as in earlier periods, the supply of slaves had to be "lubricated", as Gwyn Campbell puts it, by a stream of gifts and trading fees³⁵. It is possible that a certain misunderstanding was at play during these exchanges; for while on the one hand it is possible to perceive it as a material purchase of trading rights (which is probably how the Dutch saw it), on the other one may recognize within its codes the features of a ritualized ceremony, governed by a particular cultural vocabulary and etiquette. It is therefore necessary to make some comments about the cultural significance of the practice. European traders had been presenting gifts to Malagasy monarchs from the time that established trade links were developed with the communities of the island, and the custom seems to have been of universal (Malagasy) relevance. That the practice was not restricted to the west coast is borne out by the work that the historian of Madagascar, Pier Larson, has conducted on the Merina people of the late 18th and early 19th centuries³⁶. Larson's work analyses the role of slavery and the slave trade in the construction of the Merina state, which was ultimately to become the dominant political constituency on the island during the 19th century; and while the geographical boundaries of its discursive framework are restricted to the Merina highlands, his work is nonetheless relevant to the discussions that I will be entering in to at various stages in this narrative.

Larson describes how, during the Mascarene trade of the late 18th and early 19th centuries on Madagascar's north-east coast, slave purchasing and transportation was supervised and coordinated by European, predominantly French brokers who were known as *traitants*, as well as local Malagasy traders³⁷. Unlike the VOC traders in the west of the island, many of these traders were resident in Madagascar, traded in a private capacity and conducted slave-purchasing caravans into the highland interior to acquire slaves for the Mascarenes³⁸. However, in at least one respect they were similar to the merchants of the VOC vessels; they were expected to present gifts to

³⁵ Campbell, 'Madagascar and the Slave Trade (1810-1895)', *Omal' Sy Anio*, 17-20, pp. 300-301.

³⁶ Pier Larson's book, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement: Becoming Merina in Highland Madagascar, 1770-1822*, is a rich source on slave practices in the Madagascan highlands during the late 18th and early 19th centuries; I will be making extensive use of material from this book to draw comparisons with the west coast of Madagascar.

³⁷ Larson, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement*, pp. 1, 61-63.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 65-66.

various monarchs in order to establish slave-trading contracts. Larson's comments illuminate more than just the presentation of gifts; they also serve to highlight the commonality in the structure and conduct of the trade as a whole between the Merina highlands and the Sakalava west³⁹. According to Larson, the *traitants* would purchase their slaves from local suppliers, often traveling from place to place to do so; however, they would first be required to gain the permission of the monarch of the area through which they were traveling before they could do so⁴⁰. These monarchs did not necessarily personally own the slaves that were to be traded; nevertheless, it was their onus to control and regulate the trade by, firstly, "decreeing exchange values" and, secondly, by demanding the presentation of gifts from merchants in return for permission to trade⁴¹. Larson clearly interprets the presentation of gifts as a way of purchasing trade rights⁴²; and, in a strictly economic sense, this is certainly accurate. However, as I have mentioned, the ritualistic or ceremonial aspect of the presentation cannot be ignored. James Ravell, for example, considers the presentation of gifts to have partly been a means of honouring and ritually acknowledging the king, his family and his close officials, and thereby of encouraging him to actively promote the ensuing trade⁴³. A close reading of the relevant entries in these journals suggests that the actual act of presentation, and the courtly etiquette through which this act was cast, was as important to the monarch as the actual gifts themselves, and as the trade rights that were exchanged for them.⁴⁴

On 26 May a canoe bearing two local men was rowed out to *De Zon*; the king had arrived, and if the merchants would proceed to shore with the presents then the

³⁹ The Malagasy of west Madagascar are often loosely described as Sakalava, after the Sakalava kingdom that emerged in the north-west region during the 17th century. However, it is inappropriate to consider all the people of the west as constituting a single homogenous community, especially as the communities of the south, including the Toulrier region, did not partake of identical political practices to those normally associated with the Sakalava. I use the term Sakalava in this thesis, unless otherwise specified, to refer generally to the communities of the west coast and to differentiate these communities from those in other regions of Madagascar.

⁴⁰ Larson, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement*, p. 66.

⁴¹ Ibid. pp. 66-67.

⁴² Ravell partly interprets this practice as a means of imposing import and export duties, which provides a correlative reading that corroborates Larson's perspective. See Ravell, "The VOC Slave Trade between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1795", p. 32.

⁴³ Ravell, "The VOC Slave Trade between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1795", pp. 30-31.

⁴⁴ On a number of occasions, the gifts that had been selected by the merchants were inspected by the "makelaars", who retained the right to express their satisfaction, or lack thereof, towards what had been chosen. This practice highlights the significance imposed on the presentation of gifts by Malagasy communities, and was obviously intended to save the foreign traders from possible embarrassment and perhaps even from committing an unwitting insult.

negotiations could proceed⁴⁵. The two *Commies*, after securing the gifts, were rowed to the beach where the king had assembled with his retinue. After disembarking they were welcomed by the Rijksbestierder, one of the nobles (“hofgrooten”) and a party of natives, who proceeded to conduct them into the king’s presence. King Joema is described by Truter in minimal detail; he gives no direct physical description of any kind, but is merely satisfied with labeling him as the “young prince”, thus further substantiating my earlier point that either the king was a youth or a young adult, or that he had recently assumed sovereign powers. He also notes, with an apparent emphasis, that the king was surrounded by a ring of men; this state of self-presentation by the monarch, physically encircled by his courtiers, is recounted on numerous occasions by Truter and Krause, and was evidently a feature of their royal receptions that seems to have struck them to a sufficient degree that they considered it worthy of repeated attention. Naturally, the merchants would quite possibly have felt an acute sense of uneasiness, or at least some measure of personal discomfort, when initially ushered in to such a reception. While the VOC had been engaging in trade here for decades, many of the officers and crew, and very possibly the merchants themselves, were in Madagascar for the first time in their lives; and while they were obviously familiar with what was expected of them, once they had been conducted to the royal audience they would have found themselves surrounded by the natives of what was undoubtedly still a strange and alien environment, about to attempt that for which they might have considered themselves inadequately prepared. Neither merchant records their inner feelings or impressions besides the bare physical descriptions mentioned above, and so much of what I put forward here is necessarily based on possibility and conjecture. However, this emphasis on the physical constitution of the audience in this other examples allows one to infer a possible mental reality while remaining faithful to the sources; and while this inner state may have ranged from fascination to disquiet to possibly a muted alarm, one can say with a degree of certainty that the merchants did react inwardly in some measure to their encounters within this alien space, and that these reactions are embodied, albeit in a shadowy sense, within what initially seems to be a mere mechanical description.

⁴⁵ CA C 2255, ff. 93-94.

Of course, at the level of rational conception the merchants could not have expected to meet with hostility, and they were certainly treated with respect and decorum⁴⁶. As was expected, the various piles of gifts, demarcated separately to the king, his sisters and the Rijksbestierder, were presented, and proper ceremony was thus observed.

Truter does not record the reaction of the monarch to the presents, so one may assume that they met with his approval; had they not, the king would certainly have made them aware of his displeasure⁴⁷. At this stage, the significant role performed by the Rijksbestierder in negotiations comes to the fore; as the direct contact between the merchants and the king within the sphere of the audience, he occupies a position in the eyes of his European contacts that is distinct both from the monarch and his nobility and from the makelaars and other locals who assisted the Dutch on the shore. In this context the Rijksbestierder was primarily a translator, although he could fulfill other roles as well. It proves difficult to pin down in an exact description the official function of the Rijksbestierder; it is easier to illustrate the varieties of duties and responsibilities that are associated with this figure in the pages of the journals, and thus to portray him in terms of a dynamic vocabulary that best reflects the diversity of his performances.

The merchants, speaking to the king by means of the Rijksbestierder, began to engage in a form of dialogue whose primary features are emblematic of most negotiations described in the journals as a whole. After swapping a series of courteous and pleasant greetings, Truter outlined the purposes for their visit; that is, to trade for slaves in the name of the Company. The king replied that they held the Company in high regard, and that he would ensure that a profitable trade would ensue. This was all ceremony and courtesy; the king would have been originally informed by the messenger as to the reasons for the arrival of the ship, hence his immediate willingness to undertake the journey in the first place. What is also interesting is that

⁴⁶ When Europeans first arrived in Madagascar, there were certainly a number of violent conflicts with locals, causing the foreigners to realize that they would need to tread carefully in order not to give offence. However, in the context of the Dutch slave trade during the 1770s, an established commercial relationship was in place and, provided that they did not deliberately insult the locals or commit any criminal acts, the Europeans could reasonably expect to remain safe from any armed attack from their hosts. For various examples of armed conflicts between Europeans and Malagasy, see Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of Brown's *Madagascar Rediscovered*.

⁴⁷ According to Ravell, a number of kings expressed their dissatisfaction with the gifts presented to them by VOC merchants. See Ravell, "The VOC Slave Trade between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1795", p. 31.

Truter, as he and Krause did at every audience, made explicit his intention to trade in the name of the Company; on no occasion do either of them ever allude to a possibility that they might be seeking trade in a private capacity. One can attribute this emphasis on the Company's propriety over the trade to two reasons. Firstly, they obviously were purchasing slaves for the Company's service at the Cape, and so were merely truthfully representing their trading charter; and secondly, because the journals would have been open to perusal by Company officials after their return home. It has been well established that Company employees were frequently far from honest in their dealings, and often undertook trading ventures that contravened the VOC's established monopoly within the bounds of its influence⁴⁸. It is not beyond possibility that Truter, or Krause for that matter, entertained some notion of obtaining a small personal profit during their sojourn on the island; whether they did so or not is difficult to gauge. Had they been so inclined, either merchant would have seen it as imperative to maintain a veneer of purely honest dealings. Whether they entertained such notions or not, the merchants would certainly have considered it essential that their daily records represented all transactions and agreements as being above board, and so could have deemed it necessary to constantly reiterate that it was the VOC that was entering into trade agreements with local monarchs. Both the historical experience of trade on the island and plain common sense would indicate that the Malagasy sovereigns cared little for the Company's trade interests or attempts at establishing a monopoly; provided that the goods were what they wanted, they were prepared to trade with any entity, be it European or Arab, and would probably have considered it profitable to engage with a number of different clients. Such emphases on the Company's prominence in the negotiating process is thus probably included more for the benefit of the officials back home than for any other party.

Once such introductions had been concluded, the merchants and the king proceeded to indulge in what proved, for the merchants at least, to be a particularly stressful and at times frustrating aspect of the trade. They would now have to agree on a mutually acceptable accord, a set of prices according to which the trade would take place. Needless to say, there was seldom an immediate agreement between the two parties as to what exactly this accord should be; and so, the majority of such dialogues

⁴⁸ See Mike Dash's discussion of the widespread corruption among VOC employees, including merchants, in *Batavia's Graveyard*, pp. 62-64.

engendered some attempt at bargaining. Taking all such instances into consideration, it would appear that the Dutch were the more inadequate of the two when it came to this, although such apparent weakness can be traced to a number of factors, not least of which is their enforced accommodation to an environment of cultural norms with which they were still largely unfamiliar.

In order to clarify the agency and initiative implicit within such trading relationships, and how this initiative was invested in the relationship by the Europeans and the Malagasy respectively, I will be describing the trade negotiations between Truter and Joema, followed by the commercial engagements that resulted from them. Interwoven with these descriptions will be included a series of reflections that draw on their key elements, as well as on secondary materials that will shed a comparative light on the peculiarities of this trade and on the connections that can be discerned between it and internationalized slave trades elsewhere on the African continent. It is necessary, at the outset, to highlight the existence of an essential tension within the trading relationships under discussion, one which effectively prevented either party from ever completely assuming the ascendant. My purpose in this narration is to illuminate the particularities of this tension.

John Thornton, who has written extensively on the Atlantic slave trade⁴⁹, has demonstrated that African participation in the Atlantic slave trade was voluntary, and in the hands of local decision makers⁵⁰. It is certainly possible to establish an association between these comments and what one observes in these particular encounters in Madagascar. While the circumstances and consequences accompanying different negotiations may have varied, the strong and decisive hand of the Malagasy monarchs within these commercial deliberations is almost invariably in evidence.

⁴⁹ At various intervals I will be drawing on Thornton's book *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, which, as its title suggests, provides an overview of African involvement in the slave trade (and other aspects of the internationalist Atlantic world) from the 15th to the 18th centuries.

⁵⁰ Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, p. 125. He does this partly through his critique of the "gun-slave cycle", and partly by drawing on a wide range of encounters between European traders and African political and commercial figures from the 15th to the 18th centuries.

Often the king would be the first to make a proposal, unless he consented to trade as per a previous year's accord, as was sometimes the case⁵¹. Joema thus proposed that, "voor een slaaf of slavin, dog zonder onderschijld van jaaren", it would be reasonable to exchange 2 pieces snaphanen, 50 pounds bussekruijt, 50 pounds musquet kogels and 100 pieces snaphaan steenen; and to this he added that for one 3 year old ox they pay 1 piece guineas bruijn blauw. As neither merchant details what their expectations were of the audience, it is difficult to gauge what their anticipations as to the king's proposal might have been. It is possible that Truter considered this to be a reasonable price, and one that in his opinion any fair-dealing trading partner would be willing to accept. Certainly, the irritation and even anger that he expresses at later stages in the voyage, and the even more vehement protestations of frustration advanced by his predecessor Krause, would indicate that on more than one occasion they considered themselves cheated or dealt with unfairly. However, it must have also been understood by any even partially informed merchant that accords in Madagascar were usually achieved by bargaining and negotiating, and that invariably the deciding hand would reside more on the side of the king than on their own.

At this point, a general comment regarding these trade relationships needs to be made, the import of which will become clearer in the second chapter of this thesis. With the final accord having to meet with the king's approval, and their being unable or unwilling to trade without such a formal contract being agreed upon, the Dutch merchants were certainly at something of a disadvantage, and frequently were forced to accept prices with which they were unhappy; but this does not mean that they were entirely subordinate to the whims of their trading partners. In fact, their expressions of irritation, anger and dismay may at times have been as much a part of their bargaining gestures as a display of any genuine grievance, although the vehemence with which some of these incidents were evidently written would indicate that the latter was not entirely feigned. Nevertheless, having prepared for a bargaining process that previous trading and commercial experience had not necessarily trained them for, the Dutch merchants were caught in something of a double bind; attempting to bargain and to play the strength of their hand with as much insistence as possible, they yet found

⁵¹ In Chapter 2, I will be exploring an encounter between Truter and another Malagasy king where it was agreed to trade according to a previous accord. Of course, in such an eventuality no bargaining as such would occur; however, the ritual structure of the royal audience would remain essentially the same.

themselves more often than not subject to physical and cultural conditions over which they possessed little capacity to exert personal initiative and direction.

Larson's description of the conditions under which the French *traitants* negotiated with Malagasy kings in the north-east and the Merina highlands reveals a commonality in royal conduct and presence that is evident in both regions during the closing decades of the 18th century. He does not describe any such negotiation in any detail, but his general points are certainly pertinent. These kings would regulate the exchange rates for all slave trading in the areas under their jurisdiction by decree, exchange rates that would legally hold whether the slaves being traded were owned by the king or not⁵². Thus, merchants could not enter into their own negotiations with individual sellers, but would be compelled to purchase according to this stipulated agreement, an agreement ratified by the king's royal authority. The experience of VOC merchants on the south-west coast largely corresponds to the principles outlined by Larson; for while these merchants, like the *traitants*, would purchase slaves from a variety of different sellers that included but was not exclusive to the king, they would only contract these purchases after such an accord had been mutually ratified, and its commercial conditions would be strictly adhered to. The fact that the kings "decreed" these exchange values also suggests a definite imbalance in contracting, and hence in diplomatic, initiative. As such, all trading operations were ultimately subject to the king's sanction, and conferred by virtue of his presence and permission. This imbalance is representative of the general character of the relationship between king and merchant, despite regional and historical variations; for it locates the foreign traders in a dependent position, both symbolic and commercial, with the local ruler⁵³.

It would appear that on this occasion the price originally proposed by the king was accepted with no obvious disagreement, and for the remainder of their stay slaves were purchased for 2 pieces snaphanen, 50 pounds bussekruijt, 50 pounds kogels and 100 pieces snaphaan stenen. After concluding the agreement, Truter records that the king and his company departed, no doubt to return to their inland residence. This was the last that Truter and his fellows would see of the king on this particular sojourn; the

⁵² Larson, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement*, pp. 66-67.

⁵³ In Chapter 2, I will be exploring the particularities that this form of relationship could assume in a peculiar context in more detail.

trade would now be overseen, on the Malagasy side, by the brokers or “makelaars”, who would be responsible for ensuring that the supply of slaves was maintained, and that they were paid according to the price that was stipulated in the accord.

The agreement that was reached here between Truter and Joema is largely representative of the accords that were drawn up elsewhere on the voyage, and resemble those that Krause of *De Neptunus* contracted as well. While the number of items required for a slave may have changed from place to place, the items themselves are largely of the same order. What is most conspicuous about this period is that the items demanded by the Malagasy were either armaments or ammunition; the beads and other trifles that may have been acceptable before now formed no large part of any transaction, and were usually exchanged only for foodstuffs and other provisions.

During the initial decades of contact between Europeans and the Malagasy, beads and other ornaments were accepted for trading purposes. Mervyn Brown, in his general history of Madagascar, recounts how during the first few decades of the 17th century (particularly the 1630s), when British ships began calling at St. Augustine’s Bay on a more regular basis, the European visitors would often purchase their supplies from the locals in exchange for red cornelian beads from India⁵⁴. At first the Malagasy had demanded payment in silver, but after developing an attraction for the beads they were willing to trade their oxen for them, often for as little as seven or eight beads a bullock⁵⁵. The VOC, who would have been in possession of a good number of similar beads from their trading activities in the East, would probably have had their efforts to trade in such ornamentation met with a similarly appreciative response. The fact that beads still made up a portion of the goods traded for provisions during these two voyages, even if not on such lucrative (for the Dutch) terms, indicates that there was still something of a desire, at least on the part of the coastal peoples, for items that were of purely decorative value. It was not just in Madagascar that Europeans found willing buyers for their beads. John Thornton notes the popularity of beads (as well as cloth and other decorative items) in western Africa during the 16th and 17th centuries, a popularity that reflected a general desire on the part of local populations for

⁵⁴ Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, p. 38.

⁵⁵ Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, p. 38.

European commodities⁵⁶. In particular, claims Thornton, beads were desired for “their prestige and foreignness”, and were clearly not perceived to possess value purely in monetary terms⁵⁷. While the economic conditions in Madagascar were vastly different to those on the Atlantic coast of the African mainland, it is not improbable that a similar sentiment guided the predilections of the west coastal Malagasy for items that seem to bear little in the way of either fiscal or functional value. (Although the Malagasy had been willing to trade in silver, they would not have perceived such exchanges simply in the terms of monetary value either.) However, during the 1760s and 1770s the Malagasy were no longer willing just to accept beads, even for foodstuffs; they were now more integrated into the international trading system, and had become accustomed both to the goods that the Europeans had to offer and to their leverage in acquiring them. By the 1760s and 1770s, when European trade was conducted according to practices that were now well established, the tastes of the Malagasy had undergone a profound transformation, a transformation that would have largely been the result of their increasing exposure to and familiarity with European firearms over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries⁵⁸. To highlight the particularities of this transformation, it is fruitful to compare aspects of the Malagasy trade with that in west and central Africa. A fairly wide variety of goods were traded on the coasts of west and central Africa during the years of the Atlantic slave trade; and while this trade certainly included firearms, it seems that in comparison the Malagasy demand for European weaponry was particularly acute.

Two historians of Africa, John Thornton and Joseph Miller, have devoted some attention to the role of armaments in the slave trading economies of Europe and Africa, thus providing a useful foundation on which to draw such a comparison⁵⁹. It would make sense to begin with Miller’s overview of the materials exchanged in the European trade in Angola. The trade was by no means the sole property of the

⁵⁶ Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, p. 52.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Gwyn Campbell, in an article on the slave trade in Madagascar during the 19th century, notes that on the west coast during the 1800s the Malagasy traded slaves for firearms and cloth. It would thus appear that their demand had not altered significantly by the early decades of the 19th century. See Campbell, ‘Madagascar and the Slave Trade (1810-1895)’, *Omal’ Sy Anio*, 17-20, p. 293.

⁵⁹ I have already mentioned John Thornton. Joseph Miller has completed a comprehensive economic history of the Portuguese slave trade in present-day Angola during the 18th and early 19th centuries, with the evocative title of *Way of Death*. The relevance of their work is the comparative light it sheds on the material nature of transactions such as that which I have described, which does something to illuminate the motivations of the Malagasy sovereigns and brokers involved in the slave trade.

Portuguese; Miller claims that British, Dutch, French and Brazilian vessels partook in the commerce. The most common general product included in the cargoes of these vessels to trade for slaves was cloth and textiles, originating largely from China and India, which comprised an estimated third of the cargoes' overall value by European standards⁶⁰. The next most common item was alcohol, usually spirits or wine, and comprising approximately twenty percent of the cargoes' value⁶¹. (While the Dutch often presented alcohol to the sovereigns as gifts, and while in certain agreements a portion of alcohol was included, the Malagasy do not seem to have accorded the same level of intent to the alcohol trade.) Muskets and gun powder, which, taken collectively, was the third most popular trading good, comprised only ten percent of the cargoes' value⁶².

In the absence of a detailed comparative economic analysis of Madagascar and the states of west and central Africa, it is difficult to ascertain why the Malagasy demand for armaments was so much more acute than on the mainland, and I will not be attempting such an analysis here. The states of the African mainland clearly had evolved different economic structures and imperatives to those in Madagascar, which might partly explain the greater range of their demands; this was probably due in large part to the fact that their commercial activities were integrated over a wider geographical area and a more diverse cultural landscape. My interest, however, is more in how the supply of weapons affected political structures and military conflicts in those societies where they had been purchased, and how this can then be applied to the Madagascan context. Both Miller and Thornton offer some fascinating hypotheses in this regard.

Thornton is reticent to conclude that European firearms had a deeply transformative effect on African military power and strategy. While some scholars hold that the introduction of European weaponry, and its subsequent improvement and mass production, influenced both warfare and the slave trade itself, Thornton holds to a different opinion, similar in certain respects to Miller's; that the tendency to hail the introduction of the firearm as the most revolutionary influence on local African

⁶⁰ Miller, *Way of Death*, pp. 73-74.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 75.

⁶² Ibid.

militarism is largely erroneous⁶³. However, although the trade in firearms failed to effect a transformative aspect on the military strength or effectiveness of African states, as African armies came to depend more and more on European armaments, the increasing demand for these firearms was ensured⁶⁴.

Miller agrees with Thornton that the influence of armaments on African military campaigns should not be overestimated; in fact, he claims that European weapons were not prized primarily for their effectiveness in battle⁶⁵. These two scholars, therefore, are in general agreement that European armaments did not effect a comprehensive transformation of African warfare in its material facets, although certain, relatively minor adjustments in strategy and martial organization would have been prompted by the introduction of these weapons. Where the trade in these weapons did induce something of a transformation was in the realm of the symbolic legitimacy for political authority⁶⁶. Hence, the symbolic weight that the possession of such armaments engendered had the potential to overturn the established structures of political authority, and to replace traditional rulers with others whose entire claim to such authority was based not on customary criteria, but on what Miller subsequently labels the “supernatural” powers conferred on the owner by the possession of such weapons⁶⁷. In this way, upstart rulers could gain dependents in unprecedented numbers, and increasingly began to sell the dependents of the older, established rulers in return for more armaments⁶⁸. Miller also claims that firearms could extend the “supernatural powers” through which African rulers maintained their legitimacy; thus, those more established rulers who acquired such weapons could see their authority strengthened, as well as challenged⁶⁹.

⁶³ Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, pp. 113-116, 120-121. In order to justify this thesis, which amounts to a critique of the “gun-slave cycle”, he cites the failed attempts of the Portuguese to effect direct conquests in Angola after 1575. The “gun-slave cycle” is a theory, popular among some historians, that the introduction of European armaments into Africa had the effect of enabling local kings and brokers to acquire more slaves and which in turn allowed them to trade for even greater quantities of guns, thus creating a cycle of ever-increasing trade of both slaves and guns. The theory thus also attempts to postulate a causal link between practices of warfare on the African continent and the European-initiated international slave trade.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 123. Thornton also concludes that the firearm trade in Africa did not directly alter the capacity of African polities to provide European traders with slaves.

⁶⁵ Miller, *Way of Death*, p. 87.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 86

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 87.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 87.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 87.

Miller writes that Africans would refuse to trade with Europeans if their offer of trade goods lacked a suitable proportion of firearms; and this bargaining chip certainly has echoes with the 18th century VOC-Madagascan trade⁷⁰. The evident desire for such firearms among the Malagasy sovereigns most probably reflects the symbolic and politically ritualized status that was increasingly accorded to them, a status and power that cannot be comprehended in purely material or economic terms. It is for this reason that the trade in firearms may accurately be labeled, in a quote from Miller, as “ ‘the soul of commerce’ ”; and as this overview of a trading encounter between the VOC and a Malagasy monarch illuminates, firearms and ammunition were very much the centre of this cross-cultural commercial venture.

Both Thornton and Miller are writing in fairly generalized terms about commercial activities on the African mainland. However, the historical experience of Madagascar can certainly not be divorced from that of the rest of Africa; and it is therefore highly probable that European weapons were desired by Malagasy rulers for reasons similar to those that Miller describes. Rene Barendse briefly discusses the incipient formation of this demand in Madagascar during the 17th century, when Europeans began to establish trading relationships with various Malagasy polities; in fact, he partly affirms the theory of the “gun-slave cycle”, by claiming that by trading guns for slaves the Europeans contributed towards an increase in warfare both on the coast and in the interior of the island⁷¹. Whether one ultimately affirms the theory or not, it is clear that Malagasy sovereigns from the 17th century developed a strong inclination for firearms, a penchant that fuelled the slave trade by allowing Europeans to gain a commercial foothold in various regions of Madagascar. By attributing a symbolic value to such weapons, the coastal kings would thus have sought after European armaments in order to cement their legitimacy and to extend the supernatural weight of their authoritative powers. That the Malagasy knew something about these armaments is proved by an incident when on 7 September Truter visited the community of Anpandre, ruled by I-haringie Sinangambo, near the Maningaaren River⁷². At Anpandre, the Rijksbestierder expressed unhappiness with the muskets that were included in the presents, claiming that they were too old and of inferior

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 93.

⁷¹ Barendse, *Cultures of Madagascar*, p. 147.

⁷² CA C 2255, ff. 54-56.

quality. While the Dutch were allowed to trade according to a previous year's contract, the Malagasy were only willing to exchange slaves for gunpowder and "contant" (cash or coin), and this after Truter promised to bring more suitable muskets in future years. Clearly, this Malagasy community had traded regularly for European weapons, and was fairly familiar with the current standard of technology. Thus, they were unwilling to settle for the substandard armaments that the Company, evidently in the hope that they could get rid of old weapons in return for far more valuable slaves, had granted to Truter. Effectively functioning firearms had become central to the political concerns of Malagasy sovereigns; and while it is not stated explicitly in the journals, the value of these weapons, as evidenced by the considerable care with which the Malagasy approached their purchase, was most probably of a symbolic and representational nature, and thus of more than purely functional significance to these monarchs' political engagements.

From this moment, much of the worries of Truter, Paddenberg and the other senior officials could be laid to rest, bar one⁷³. The work would now be mundane and repetitive; taking possession of the Factory, receiving the "makelaars" each day as slaves were gradually brought to the beach, assessing each slave for possible defects, and then purchasing those that were deemed to be in good physical condition. The one concern that would continue to dog the merchants, and that would frequently be cited as the cause of their packing up and removing to another location, was the quantity and regularity of the supply. On almost all occasions, slaves were brought to the Factory as individuals or possibly in pairs; large crowds of slaves such as proliferate in much of the imagery surrounding the continental African slave trade seems to not have been much of a feature in Madagascar. Often, in a single day only one slave would be brought, sometimes two or three; the numbers never exceed this by very much, and would thus indicate a very gradual procedure of slave acquisition and transportation on the part of the Malagasies. This obviously turned the process into a time-consuming enterprise, entailing a lengthy stay on the coast for what, in the end, can look like very little gain; and quite apart from this, the Dutch were never able to obtain even a fraction of their desired quota from one location, not even one of the polities with which they had long established links, such as Toulrier. The most

⁷³ The trading period between the audience on 26 May and the departure of *De Zon* on 12 June is narrated in CA C 2255, ff. 94-95 and 2-6.

frequently cited reason for leaving a particular region was that not enough slaves, or otherwise unsuitable slaves (such as too many women, or too old and sickly), were available; the unstated sentiment that comes across within these records is that too much time is being wasted for too little profit. While the journals naturally represent the point of view of the merchants, and thus need to be treated with the appropriate level of skepticism, the basic facts recorded would indicate that the process of trade was slow and cumbersome to the point of frustration, and too variable and relative to local conditions for any meaningful predictions to success to be made. This all came after the promises of the local Malagasies officials and rulers that they had an abundance of slaves and could supply all the VOC's needs, even to the point of entirely filling up their ships; but such comments must therefore be seen as representative of the grandiloquent courtly speech favoured in most of these societies, in which the felicities of language rarely matched the reality as it would come to be experienced. It would be the slow provision of slaves, and with it the implied accusation that the Malagasy had not kept their promises, that would be the cause cited in *De Zon's* journal to leave Toulrier; which is what she did, on 12 June 1775, after purchasing 4 male and 4 female slaves.

As was mentioned, the slaves would also be given a physical inspection before it was agreed to buy them. In this aspect of the trade at least, it was the Dutch who held the upper hand. On these occasions their agency was paramount over that of the locals; for they were absolutely insistent on buying slaves, whether male or female, who were in fine physical shape and of a suitable age. As the slaves, for the most part, were intended for vigorous physical labour on Company projects, only those who were uninjured and not too old would be considered; young slaves would be purchased, although often for a lower price. The merchants were adamant about this, and never relented on this score. Where in so many other situations they were dictated to by local circumstances, in this they determined the conditions; they no doubt felt that in the absence of any certainty of success, they would at least, in that trade which they were able to engage, to get their money's worth.

Briefly, and in conclusion to this introductory aspect of the chapter. I need to mention something further about the construction of the Factory. After concluding their accord as to the price for slaves, Truter and Joema agreed on a further price, this time in

return for permission to and local assistance in building the Factory⁷⁴. For the Factory, Truter agreed to pay 100 pounds bussekruijt, 40 cans of arak, 12 pounds kogels, 1/4 gross pijpen, 100 pieces snaphaan steenen and 30 pounds tabak. As he had neglected to include any alcohol in the official present he had made to the king, Joema was likely to have been enervated by its inclusion in this transaction; it is even possible that, having noted its absence during the initial stages of the audience when the gifts were presented, he made sure to demand a good supply when the time came to discuss payment for the Factory. It can safely be assumed that he would not have remained satisfied with begging the Rijksbestierder for a shot or two, but would only have been content with his own substantial provision, readily available for whenever the occasion demanded it. Of additional interest is the fact that the king also received a quantity of tobacco, indicating that the Malagasy royalty, at least, were developing a taste for the stimulants of Europe.

In this case the Factory is recorded as consisting of the cantonment itself (which would have principally consisted of the trading area), the kitchen, the “wagthuijs” (perhaps a room or dwelling where brokers and their slaves would reside while waiting to be interviewed by the Dutch merchants) and the palisades. This last addition is of interest, as it is not mentioned in the other descriptions of the Factories contained in the journals; however, this particular list gives one of the most complete descriptions of a Factory of any of the journal entries, and it is probable that many of the Factories did include a palisade of some sort⁷⁵. If so, one is forced to question whether the Dutch were fearful of some kind of physical attack, or if this defensive structure was built more out of convention than for any more practical reason. Given the sometimes violent confrontations that had occurred between local coastal tribes and European interlopers, it is possible that the Dutch were to a certain extent apprehensive, even when engaging in legal trade in territory that was deemed to be friendly. It is even possible that, aware as they were of the frequent warfare that occurred between different communities in the region, the Europeans were concerned

⁷⁴ CA C 2255, f. 94.

⁷⁵ In Boucher’s description of the voyage of *De Brak* in 1742, he recounts that the Factory that was built in St. Augustine’s Bay was encircled by a palisade. Furthermore, James Ravell claims that in most instances a Factory would include a palisade; thus, it was common practice to erect such a barrier, and one was probably built in most cases even when it is not specified in the records as such. See Boucher, ‘The Voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742’, *Historia*, 24, 1, p. 54; Ravell, “The VOC Slave Trade between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1795”, p. 28.

about the possibility that a rival group, unbound by the diplomatic immunity that, by virtue of their commercial agreement, was accorded them by their trading partners, would not hesitate to wage war against them. While much of this narrative would seem to imply that there was little direct danger to the European presence, the construction of a physical defense does perhaps expose the unease that the Dutch continued to experience in this environment, and their possible fear that they were not completely safe from violence. Clearly, such a structure was approved by the monarch, who did not consider it an affront to his dignity or status as protector, if he ever considered himself as such. The fact that the factory was a temporary structure, and that it would not impose any continuous European presence within their territories, would have given cause for Malagasy monarchs to be willing to lend their support to their construction.

Truter uses the word “volk” to indicate those who began chopping wood for the building of the Factory, which took place under his direction. Despite the fact that they had paid the monarch for it, it was nevertheless the responsibility of the Europeans to actually construct the building, although they often made use of local labour to do so. In this case, it is unclear whether Truter is using the word “volk” to refer to the Malagasy, or to his crew, or to both; however, other accounts emphasize that the building was often a collaborative venture between these two parties, and it is probable that this principle applied here as well. The Dutch were always keen to erect the structure in as short a time as possible, as the trade would be sporadic before the Factory was completed in full, and thus seem to have deemed the size of the crew as insufficient for the task. Hence the frequency with which they made use of local labour; and it can therefore be deducted that the payments made by Truter to King Joema were in return for, firstly, the right to erect a trading structure on the king’s land and, secondly, for the services to be rendered by the king’s structures in the building’s construction. It is thus ever clearer that while the monarchs’ residences were invariably inland, their sovereignty certainly extended to the shore and included within its ambit the people who were living there. Even the erection of a temporary trading station on the beach, then, had to be received with the approval of the monarch, to be gained within the larger pattern of negotiation; concepts of legality and jurisprudence, as they had been formulated within these local communities, extended from the king’s residence to the shore, and had to be negotiated by the

Dutch at every stage of their sojourn within the monarch's locality. It was also an act of purchase, in the sense that a trading license might be purchased today. One begins to see, as one considers the procedures that both sides engaged in, that trading on the west Madagascan coast was by no means an ad hoc affair, in which one made up the rules as one went along and the party with the most guns would ultimately win. Frequently, it was the other way around; and this was largely because an established set of procedures had developed over the decades, with conventions that were respected, albeit grudgingly at times, by both sides. Even though the Dutch probably possessed an advantage in firepower, they abided by the rules and respected procedure and consensus, and as previous experiences of European travelers would have taught, in the event of battle they would by no means have been assured of victory⁷⁶. Despite its disadvantages and delays, legal trading was evidently perceived by the VOC to be the safest and most profitable means of acquiring a captive labour force, and this very *legality* of the trade was agreed upon and adhered to whenever they were on the island.

This collaborative venture is also one of the most significant examples of cultural contact between the two parties; with European traders cutting wood and building the Factory together with the local Malagasy, they would have been able to interact and respond to one another in ways that were perhaps inconceivable before the initial moment of encounter. As the journals were written by the merchants and so inevitably reflects their experiences and, of course, their economic ramifications, much of the narrative of cultural encounter is restricted to the elites of both societies, and the ways in which the understood and misunderstood one another. However, the men of *De Zon* and *De Neptunus*, and of course those on other voyages as well, would have interacted with the local populations according to vastly divergent paradigms and sentiments. Less inhibited by courtly protocol and the dictates of the commercial enterprise, it is probable that the encounters that occurred were of a different order to those

⁷⁶ Mervyn Brown recounts a number of violent confrontations between Europeans and Malagasy during the initial decades of contact, during which the Europeans frequently came off second best. In one case, a fledgling English settlement at St. Augustine's Bay from 1645 to 1646 was forced to be abandoned, partly due to the continuous violent hostility of the natives. He does not provide much detail regarding the context of this thesis; however, the communities described in the journals were well-armed and included large cadres of warriors, not to mention the fact that gun trading with Europeans had been occurring for some time and so the Malagasy would have possessed a number of firearms as well as spear and assegais. See Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, pp. 32-33, 37-38, 44-46.

experienced and recorded by the merchants in their dealings with the nobility and officialdom. In the absence of any direct narratives, one is forced to speculate as to the nature and depth of these encounters. However, a number of incidents recorded by the merchants shed some light on this murky sphere, and serve to direct and proportion one's speculations.

Two features in particular stand out in the journal narratives. The first is the deliberate desertion of the vessel by four sailors. Acts of desertion, of course, are certainly not unique in the annals of seafaring; however, the way in which Truter frames and explains them in the journals is of particular interest. The first three deserters were *bosschieters* (woodcutters), and they all went absent while the ship was anchored at their second stop, Morondave; the first, Johannes Wilhelm Schonewijs, absconded on 10 July⁷⁷, the second, Jan Harmen Asseling, on 19 July⁷⁸ and the third, Jan Vallenburg van Breenen, on 3 August⁷⁹. The fourth was a sailor, Jochem Simon Martens, who was discovered to be missing on 24 October during their sojourn at Anpandre, near the Maningaaren River. Truter cites the first three desertions as one of the reasons for his decision to leave Morondave, not least because he held the locals, including the monarch, responsible for their failure to apprehend the absconders⁸⁰.

These rapid acts of desertion are given a fascinating twist by the actions of a marooned European sailor that *De Neptunus* had taken on board while trading at Toulhier. On 11 June, Truter had agreed to take on board this sailor, Joseph de Nies, who claimed to have been serving on a Portuguese ship that was wrecked the previous July on the coast near Toulhier⁸¹. De Nies told Truter that his fellow crew members had been rescued by two passing Portuguese vessels that October, but that he had been recovering from an illness at the king's residence inland, and so had not been able to leave the island with his compatriots. However on 5 August, while the crew was making preparations to leave Morondave, de Nies too decided to desert, leading

⁷⁷ CA C 2255, ff. 22-24.

⁷⁸ CA C 2255, ff. 26-27.

⁷⁹ CA C 2255, ff. 29-30.

⁸⁰ CA C 2255, ff. 29-32. Truter claims in his journal that he requested the king to provide assistance in apprehending the deserters, and although the king promised to do so the three men were never found. He thus blames the king personally, suggesting that it would have been impossible for the men to survive in an alien environment without local assistance.

⁸¹ CA C 2255, ff. 4-6.

Truter to conclude that his story had been invented, and that he must have been a deserter from a previous vessel⁸².

Truter was thus definitely of the opinion that it was possible for deserters to survive in Madagascar with support from the locals, and that in this case the Malagasy were actively abetting the deserters in their attempts to conceal themselves from the ship's officers. The fact that the deserters failed to return to the ship suggests the possibility that they were being supported in some way by members of the local populace, and if so, that local Malagasy officials, if not the king himself, were aware of it⁸³. It also raises the possibility that these deserters made plans to abscond while working on shore alongside the Malagasy, presumably after somehow arriving at the conclusion that they would be protected should they remove themselves from the ambit of the vessel and its attendant European presence. There are a number of incidents of Europeans spending extended periods of time on the island, and even of being incorporated into Malagasy social groups⁸⁴. It is therefore not impossible that these deserters found a new life for themselves on the island, free of what they must have considered to be an environment of hardship and oppression; the very fact that de Nies had been able to survive on the island for what must have been at least a few months, and that he actually absconded again before the vessel left Morondave⁸⁵, indicates that some Europeans could indeed survive in what was to many of their contemporaries an alien and hostile environment, and that a number of them could even find it hospitable⁸⁶.

⁸² CA C 2255, ff. 32-33.

⁸³ Maurice Boucher recounts how in 1742 there were three desertions from *De Brak*. The first absconder was not recovered, while the second and third, who ran off together, were recaptured after the reluctant king was persuaded to assist with the search by the promise of further presents. Boucher states that the king was reluctant at first because one of the two was a smith, who he would have found useful at his court. This reinforces the possibility that deserters were able to find a place for themselves in local Malagasy communities. See Boucher, 'The Voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742', *Historia*, 24, 1, p. 55.

⁸⁴ One of the most fascinating narratives of a European castaway in Madagascar is that of Robert Drury, an English sailor who survived a shipwreck and spent fifteen years in southern Madagascar. Mervyn Brown recounts the story in his history of Madagascar; see Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, pp. 55-71. There are other examples of incorporation and intermarriage among colonists and, most notably, among the pirate population of the 16th and 17th centuries; in fact, some of the children of European pirates and Malagasy women were to play a crucial role in later political endeavours on the island. Again, see Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, pp. 32, 50, 72-109.

⁸⁵ This is, of course, to the extent that one can trust certain key elements of his story.

⁸⁶ Incidents of sailors deserting for what they perceived to be an island paradise are by no means restricted to Madagascar. Anne Salmond, in her exploration of the voyages of Captain Cook, describes how after the *Discovery* had put into the Society Islands in 1777 two of the crew deserted and were

The second feature is the collaborative construction of a tomb for the under-merchant Paddenburg, who died on 1 October at Anpandre⁸⁷. This collaborative venture illustrates an established form of cooperation between Europeans and Malagasy that transcended commercial practice. A number of days before, on 12 September, the Europeans had been witness to the local burial practice, when the “makelaars” informed Truter that one of the locals had died in the night, and that the Malagasy were preparing a grave for his body⁸⁸. Truter must have observed them doing so, for he records that the Malagasy brought a large rock down from a nearby mountain and assembled it by the grave. After Paddenburg died on 1 October, Truter requested the “makelaars” to provide assistance in erecting a similar grave; he then alludes to a previous occasion, when a *Commies* Leijs had died and the locals had provided a similar service. By the end of the day the grave was complete, and the following morning the body was buried; the ceremony was attended by the “makelaars”, two “onderkoningen” who were assisting with the trade and other natives, who were then entertained in the Factory complex until the afternoon⁸⁹.

Burial and the erection of tombs are an integral aspect of Malagasy culture, and are imbued with a sacred ritualistic significance⁹⁰. The tombs of southern Madagascar are particularly spectacular, and were constructed from slabs of local stone⁹¹; thus, Truter’s passing description is lent a definite authenticity. The burial of Paddenburg is a rather poignant moment of cross-cultural accommodation, one in which members of both communities set aside the business of commerce and its attendant tensions for a short while and devoted themselves to a common purpose free of mutual antagonism. One cannot overstress the impact of such a moment, or attribute any profound alteration of social consciousness to it. However, it reminds one that cultures alien to

welcomed and protected by the locals. The two men were eventually recovered, however, largely due to Cook’s adoption of rather more forceful measures to encourage the locals to surrender the absconders. The deserters of *De Zon* must thus be seen within the context of a wider maritime impulse, one that illumines the ambiguous sentiments of European commanders towards non-European societies that their men found attractive. See Salmond, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog*, pp. 376-377.

⁸⁷ CA C 2255, ff. 64-65.

⁸⁸ CA C 2255, ff. 59-60.

⁸⁹ CA C 2255, f. 65.

⁹⁰ John Mack, a British anthropologist who has conducted fieldwork in Madagascar, includes material on Malagasy burial customs, including the fascinating practice of the second burial, in his book *Madagascar: Island of the Ancestors*. See in particular pp. 67-85.

⁹¹ Mack, *Madagascar: Island of the Ancestors*, p. 79.

each other have as much of a capacity for respect and accommodation as for confrontation; and that such a capacity, as is demonstrated by this example, could best come to the fore in circumstances that, to the protagonists of this drama at least, were certainly quite tragic.

The fact that so much activity was concentrated on the beach brings to mind the work that scholars such as Greg Denning have conducted on islands and beaches as metaphorical spaces that are symbolic, in a sense, of frontier zones and sites of cultural encounter. Philip D. Morgan makes a brief reference to Denning in his evocation of the encounters between the British and indigenous peoples in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries⁹². For Denning, both beaches and islands can be perceived in such metaphorical terms; they are “a cultural boundary”⁹³, a division of “the world between here and there, us and them, good and bad, familiar and strange”⁹⁴. In this sense, one can interpret the beaches of Madagascar described here as such spaces of cultural encounter, ones in which brief moments of assimilation are juxtaposed by the drawing off of divisions and boundaries that separate the two communities into distinct spheres of consciousness. The journals themselves are key textual representations of these spaces of encounter and transition, spaces that incorporate a wide diversity of moments that exhibit the entire range of cross-cultural possibility, from outright hostility, to mutual recognition and accommodation, to something that at times approached camaraderie. The discomfiture and muted sense of dependence that accompanied the Dutch merchants and officials on their journeys into the interior serves to further highlight the significance of the beach as a bounded space; for it was when they left the relative safety of the shore that they were confronted with the most alien and often confrontational experiences of their journey. It was while they remained within the boundaries of this metaphorical world, however, that they possessed their greatest degree of authentic control over their own interactions with the strangeness of the culture in which they found themselves.

⁹² Morgan, *Empire and Others*, pp. 42-78.

⁹³ Morgan, *Empire and Others*, p. 55.

⁹⁴ Morgan quoting Denning, *Empire and Others*, p. 55.

From this description, then, one can draw up a general model of the established means by which the Dutch and the Malagasy would trade with one another⁹⁵. This model is replicated, to varying degrees of consistency and success, throughout the voyages that were made to the island in the latter half of the 18th century. If we take these voyages as representative of the period of established commercial contact between the Cape-based VOC and west Malagasy communities before the VOC opted to remove their attentions further north up the African coastline, then the pattern that is here elucidated was followed, or at least attempted, whenever a Dutch vessel dropped anchor.

To take what I have so far included and to shape it into a generalized trading pattern, let me draw briefly on some of the features that I have explored above. On arriving at a location where they hoped trade would be available, their assumption being based either on previous experience or because of an invitation extended on the behalf of a particular ruler, the vessel would drop anchor and the officers would prepare to make contact with the locals. If necessary they might send a boat with a landing party to search for the local inhabitants, but more often than not their vessel's arrival would have been observed from the shore and native canoes would be dispatched from the beach, bearing a local reception committee. This party would often include a local official that the Dutch were able to recognize as such; it might be one of the "makelaars", or if not then another senior Malagasy present on the shore and possessing some official standing. The first negotiations would take place either on the ship or on the shore, depending on who had made the initial trip, and several additional meetings would take place in the days subsequent to that. At some stage during these initial encounters, and usually after the first meeting as the Dutch were invariably devoted to ensuring that the trade was instigated as rapidly as was possible, the merchant would make clear his intentions and would ask for permission to trade. Upon receiving this request a messenger would be dispatched to the local monarch, whose residence would be some distance inland. A return message would usually take between one and three days to be delivered, depending on the distance that the

⁹⁵ Ravell provides a similar summation of the general mechanics of the trade, based on his extensive survey of ship journals. Our models corroborate each other in all their essentials, indicating that the practice the Dutch followed on the voyages I am describing followed established codes that both communities respected. See Ravell, "The VOC Slave Trade between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1795", pp. 25-40.

messengers were compelled to cover. In the meantime, the merchants would select appropriate gifts for the monarch, for any of his relatives for whom they might have deemed it necessary and for one of the king's senior officials, the Rijksbestierder. During this period the skipper, if indeed he was present at any of these meetings at all, would play a minimal role in their proceedings; all such negotiations were conducted between the merchants and the "makelaars", with responsibility on the side of the Europeans vested primarily in the person of the upper-merchant.

Once the messenger had returned, he would indicate one of two courses of action: either that the monarch would be traveling to the beach to meet with the Dutch at their place of anchor, or, more frequently, that the merchant and several companions must travel in the company of a local official to the king's residence, there to contract a suitable accord. In either case, but particularly if it was the merchant who was required to do the traveling, the process could take up to several days. It was the king's prerogative to decide who would be the one to do the traveling, hence the frequency with which the Dutch merchants were compelled to undertake the journey inland; the merchants would await the king's directions via the messenger, and then comply. If they occasionally expressed displeasure with the tardiness of the messengers' return, they never directly challenged the monarch's prerogative to decide on the time and location for this initial audience.

The audience would consist on the Malagasy side of the king, his nobles and attendants and the Rijksbestierder, who would often be surrounded by a large party of armed men; and on the Dutch side of the upper-merchant, who would have been accompanied by two or three of the ship's officers. All conversation would take place between the monarch and the merchant, with the Rijksbestierder fulfilling the essential function of mediator. The audience most frequently took place out of doors, often beneath the overarching canopy of the tamarind tree; the king and the merchant would be seated on locally-crafted stools, while their various retinues would stand encircling them. The latter would remain silent, and the only parties that are ever recorded as speaking are the monarch, the merchant and the Rijksbestierder.

By means of the ensuing conversation, an agreement, or accord as it is frequently labeled, would be reached regarding the price for slaves, the price for rice and other

supplies in those cases where the monarch was willing to trade substantial quantities of his agricultural produce and in most cases the price to be paid for the erection of the Factory. These prices would often tend towards the will of the sovereign, and the merchants would sometimes express their displeasure at what they considered to be the king's greed and avarice. Whether they were pleased or not, the accord would invariably be agreed to, and the merchants, if it was they who had done the traveling, would make preparations to return to the ship. Prior to these negotiations, the merchant would have presented the gifts to the king, his relatives and the Rijksbestierder; they were often inspected on the ship by the "makelaars" prior to their journey inland, and most of the time met with the monarch's approval.

Following the return of the merchant and his companions, preparations would be made to commence the trade. The Factory would be built as a joint cooperative venture between the crew of the vessel and the monarch's subjects who inhabited the coast. This would also take about two or three days to complete, during which time the trade in slaves would take place on a sporadic basis. The trade would commence in full, however, once the Factory and its associated structures had been completed. From this moment, the merchants, who had previously been traveling each day to and from the shore in one of the ship's boats, would usually reside in a dwelling included in the Factory. During the day the merchants would purchase slaves of both genders that they deemed to be in good physical condition and of a suitable age, although sometimes expressing their preference for males, particularly when they felt that too many females were being presented for their inspection. The trade would thus be managed jointly: the Malagasy brokers bringing slaves to be inspected by the Dutch merchants would be overseen by the "makelaars", and on occasion by the Rijksbestierder⁹⁶, who would ensure that the trade would be conducted according to the specifications that had been laid out in the accord, while the Dutch merchants would select those slaves that met with their approval, rejecting those that were too old or that were physically disfigured or injured. The merchants thus executed their agency most acutely in this sphere, and could not be dissuaded by the "makelaars", even when their refusal to purchase certain slaves was causing tension between the two parties. The merchants always specified age or injury as the reasons for rejecting

⁹⁶ In Chapter 2, I include an episode from the voyage of *De Neptunus* where the Rijksbestierder oversaw trade on the beach.

a purchase and, at least to the extent that the records can be trusted, did not purposefully aggravate the Malagasy by inventing flippant reasons for their refusals. The trade would continue like this for between a week and a month, depending on the regularity of the supply; usually not much more than four or five slaves, and frequently less, would be purchased on a particular day. When the trade appeared to be drying up, or when they felt that they were being treated unfairly or dishonestly, the Dutch would indicate their decision to leave for another region; after explaining their reasoning to the local officials they would assemble the remainder of the trade goods and transport them on to the ship. This would often take a day, after which, when the captain deemed the wind and weather to be favourable, the order would be given to sail further along the coast to a new and hopefully more profitable region.

To complete this portrait, one must attempt to detail an aspect of the trade that, more than any other, is conspicuously missing from the VOC records. This aspect is, of course, the origin of the slaves that were purchased on these voyages; and it is necessary to explore this facet in connection with the particular manifestations of slavery within Malagasy society. No attempt to illuminate the mechanics of this trade can be considered complete without the inclusion of such an inquiry. Such an exercise will of necessity be an act of historical speculation, and one that moreover elicits possibilities rather than exactitudes. This is primarily a result of the lack of authentic primary sources at hand; and so one is compelled to rely on the scholarship of other historians, historians who have not necessarily dedicated their attentions to the west coast of Madagascar. For this purpose, I will be relying primarily on the work of a historian who has already been encountered in the pages of this narrative. This historian is Pier Larson, who, as I have mentioned, has concentrated his historical explorations to the societies of highland Madagascar in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and in particular to the institutions of slavery that informed the construction of the Merina kingdom at the turn of the 18th century.

It is probably most profitable to begin with this very concern, that of the institutions of slavery within Malagasy society. The very term “Malagasy” is rather broad, encompassing as it does the disparate cultures of the entire island. Nevertheless, continuities and connections between the Merina and Sakalava may be established; and at the very least one can, by drawing on Larson’s work, hypothesize as to the

possible institutions and conditions that produced those slaves that were ultimately purchased by the merchants of *De Zon*, *De Neptunus* and other European trading vessels.

The first method that Larson describes is that of enslaving prisoners of war, a strategy familiar to most slave historians and alluded to by both Thornton and Miller. One of the primary purposes of war in the Madagascan highlands during the late 18th century was that, as Larson puts it, of “securing captives”, thus serving to expand the human wealth of the victorious kingdom while reducing that of the defeated⁹⁷. Larson uses the term *andevo* to refer to slaves of this class, a class that occupied the bottom rung of the central Malagasy social hierarchy⁹⁸. Customary practice usually followed one of two courses: either the prisoners would be incorporated within the social community of their captors, in which case the king would gain in dependents and thus in security; or they would be ransomed back to their communities of origin, a practice that by the late 18th century had become so established that a ransom market was institutionalized and integrated into the practice of war by rival kingdoms⁹⁹. When European slave traders began to penetrate the highlands, the kings increasingly began to sell these prisoners, who otherwise would have been socially integrated or ransomed back to rival kingdoms, to the traders, and thus began the process of integrating, and thereby transforming, their local practices within an internationalized slave trading network¹⁰⁰.

What had begun as a practice of selling prisoners from rival kingdoms into slavery rapidly became internalized; and kings thus began “concentrating social institutions within their own dominions into generators of slaves”¹⁰¹. In this, one can begin to see the profound transformation that the European-initiated trade was beginning to effect on Malagasy communal and political consciousness. Larson sums this transformation quite aptly, when he describes how, after 1770, the source of new slaves “shifted from areas external to highland slavers’ own moral communities to within those very

⁹⁷ Larson. *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement*, p. 93.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 100.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 93-94.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 94.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 97.

communities themselves”¹⁰². This transformation was double-edged; for while it increased a king’s short-term power and wealth, it also began to undermine his authority by provoking considerable resentment amongst his subjects¹⁰³.

There were a number of means by which kings began to acquire slaves from within their own communities to sell to the foreign traders. In criminal trials, those who were found guilty were either executed or sold into slavery¹⁰⁴; however, the most common method was by selling off those alienated members of the community who today we would describe as debt-slaves¹⁰⁵. Traditionally, the *zazahova* had certain rights that distinguished them from the *andevo*; but the increasing sale of *zazahova* by kings and creditors to foreign traders steadily eroded this distinction, causing the *zazahova* to become progressively more interchangeable with the *andevo*¹⁰⁶.

Larson goes to some length to describe how these practices came to be viewed by many highland Malagasy as “the abuse of legitimately unequal social relationships”¹⁰⁷; in other words, the metamorphosis of what had been a customarily acceptable form of enslavement within Madagascar was now threatening the social foundations, and hence the monarchical legitimacy, of the communities affected, and in the process was prompting an increasing resentment¹⁰⁸. The strain that was becoming more and more visible was amplified by what we may label the third strategy of slave acquirement. This strategy took the form of direct kidnapping. According to Larson, this practice exacerbated the erosion of the social relationships that constituted the moral community¹⁰⁹. The period of greatest erosion occurred in the decades leading up to 1780, during which “the slaving frontier passed swiftly through highland Madagascar”; this would suggest that during the 1760s and 1770s,

¹⁰² Ibid. Larson frequently uses the term “moral community” to designate a community framed by a particular structure of inter-personal relations that is considered by the community in question to be legitimate; and it was this very legitimacy that was being threatened, both by the strategies of the foreign slave traders, and by the collusion of royal and other high-ranking figures with these traders. See Larson, p. 102.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 97.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 99. Larson labels them as *zazahova*, and clearly distinguishes them from the *andevo* slaves who were imported from beyond the moral community. The *zazahova* can only partially be described as slaves: for while they were dishonoured and in a state of bonded labour, unlike the *andevo* they remained with their kinfolk and hence within the bounds of the moral community.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 100-101.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 102.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, pp. 97-102.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 102.

kidnapping was gaining both in prevalence and in its destruction of traditionally-held moral norms, both on the part of kings and of commoners¹¹⁰. Frequently, in order to recover kidnapped kin, Malagasies would be compelled to provide a slave in exchange; and so the practice steadily entrenched itself within the broader highland culture¹¹¹. Therefore, the practice of acquiring slaves was steadily being diverted, from the sale of prisoners captured in legitimate warfare, to the sale of alienated individuals within the moral community, to the illegitimate but increasingly practiced kidnapping of people, from within the moral community and from without; and these progressive innovations were effecting consecutive challenges to previously accepted notions of monarchical duty and social hierarchy.

These three methods of enslavement are thus not disparate strategies; rather, each one engendered the next as the contact and commerce with European traders steadily transformed the political, economic and moral constitutions of the highland Malagasy societies. It is probable that a similar sequence of tactical developments characterized the slaving strategies of the Madagascan west. Certainly, the frequency with which the Dutch rejected injured or disfigured slaves suggests that a substantial proportion had been captured in war; Robert Shell attests to this notion, when he highlights the fact that many Malagasy slaves had been violently disfigured prior to their embarkation on European vessels¹¹². As far as the possible application of the other strategies is concerned, it is impossible to say for sure. However, it is by no means impossible that kings and brokers sold debt-slaves and the victims of kidnapping to Dutch traders. The slaves that the Dutch preferred, and who they invariably purchased, were, of course, not seriously injured; and while a portion of these may well have also been prisoners-of-war, the provision of slaves in fairly healthy condition would suggest that they included a number who had been acquired through less violent means than warfare. In fact, Barendse's work, although short on detail and contextualization, opines that a similar progression of slave procurement did indeed occur among the Sakalava; he claims that during the latter half of the 17th century, when the trade was becoming established, that prisoners of war were the first to be

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Shell. 'Slave Mortality on the Middle Passage to the Cape, 1658-1808'. *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, 59, 3, pp. 102 and 106.

sold, followed by debt-slaves and then, finally, the king's own subjects¹¹³. If so, then the Sakalava kingdoms of the west, like those of the Merina, would likewise have been experiencing a considerable degree of social turmoil, a turmoil that, for the most part, remains invisible in the journals of the merchants. It is primarily for this reason that one is limited to merely describing these possibilities; without a significant attempt to document the history of the region in a similar manner to what Larson has done for the Merina, one can arrive at little in the way of more definitive conclusions.

A comparison with a number of the conclusions that have been reached by Thornton and Miller regarding the Atlantic trade in central and western Africa will further contextualize the hypothesis that is included above by providing both parallels and dissimilarities. Both these authors detail how slaves were acquired by African monarchs and traders, and in their general features the strategies are remarkably similar. According to Thornton, the most common forms of slavery in west and central Africa during the Atlantic trade were military enslavement and judicial enslavement, with the former being the more widely practiced of the two¹¹⁴. He does not mention kidnapping as a strategy, and he treats judicial and military enslavement as disparate strategies with no obvious causal connection; however, in keeping with Larson's analysis of Madagascar, he acknowledges that slaves were acquired from both within and without slave-trading kingdoms (although he highlights military enslavement as of greater benefit, as it allowed kings to enslave aliens rather than their own subjects¹¹⁵.)

With Miller, we can take the comparison somewhat further. Towards the end of the 16th century, Europeans began offering imports to kings who would trade in people rather than commodities¹¹⁶. The first people to be traded were undesirables, outcasts and aliens; this included criminals, disobedient local slaves and refugees¹¹⁷. The sale of such people, according to Miller, "confirmed, rather than disrupted, established

¹¹³ Barendse, *Cultures of Madagascar*, p. 147.

¹¹⁴ Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, p. 99. In this, he seems in part to disagree with Miller, who is of the opinion that military raids were not the most effective means of acquiring slaves. However, both agree that military campaigns were waged partly for this purpose, and that many of the captives from such campaigns were ultimately sold to foreign traders.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Miller, *Way of Death*, p. 115.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 116.

ways of doing things”; thus, one can compare it to the first stage in the highland Malagasy trade, where prisoners-of-war and other aliens were sold to international traders¹¹⁸. Miller describes how these kings also soon started to engage in military campaigns with the purpose of obtaining captives; this is the first step in what he describes as the developing practice of “marshalling their (the kings’) new institutions of coercion to draw more lineage members out of the village systems of kinship, clientage and alliance”¹¹⁹. Miller is of the opinion that the overall tactic of military raids for slaves was far from an efficient strategy, and was even counter-productive; and hence, there occurred a shift inwards, into the slaving kings’ own communities, as indeed occurred in Madagascar¹²⁰.

The parallel here is striking; for many of these African kings began, in Miller’s words, “converting the coercive institutions of their realms from the collection of material tribute ... to direct extractions of people from among their own subjects”¹²¹. They did this primarily through judicial proceedings, a stratagem to which Miller attributes greater emphasis than does Thornton¹²². Miller sums up the shift appropriately, when he summarizes the innovations in slaving strategy; African kings, he claims, had ultimately “drifted from giving up unwanted outcasts to systematic extortion of their own subjects”¹²³. The parallels with the methods outlined by Larson should be clear; and what this perhaps suggests, above all else, is a commonality across a wide geographic and temporal space in specific slaving strategies; and it is this very commonality that allows one to postulate that in the west of Madagascar, where the VOC plied its trade, similar strategies had been employed to provide the slaves that were ultimately purchased by VOC merchants.

This chapter has served as an introduction, albeit a detailed one, to the mechanics of the Cape-Madagascar slave trade during the 1760s and 1770s. In the next two chapters, however, I attempt to extend my gaze beyond the mechanics of commerce to a description and interpretation of a number of human encounters that, although not typical, are in a sense emblematic of the sometimes troubled relationship between the

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p. 117.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 117-118.

¹²⁰ Ibid. pp. 119-122.

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 122.

¹²² Ibid. p. 123.

¹²³ Ibid.

Europeans and the Malagasy. Unlike the method I have adopted in this chapter, I do not attempt to construct a model or theory that will somehow “explain” these encounters; instead, I attempt to illuminate their particular, unique dynamics through a close reading of the relevant texts. The reader will notice that as I move from *De Zon* to *De Neptunus* and then finally back to *De Zon*, the atmosphere of hostility and antagonism becomes steadily more palpable, culminating in the violent conflict between the crew of *De Zon* and their recently acquired slaves on 29 August 1775. Fortunately for the Dutch, however, there was to be no such outright violence between themselves and a Malagasy sovereign on either of these two voyages. Nevertheless, the undercurrent of suspicion and mutual distrust that pervades the encounters of both Truter and Krause with local dignitaries that are described here can on occasion provide more worthwhile material than even the bloodiest of battles; and it is to the first of these, when *De Zon* arrived at Morondave on 16 June, that I now turn.

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II

De Zon and De Neptunus:

The Predicaments of Cultural Misunderstanding and Personal Conflict

The voyage of *De Neptunus* offers some striking examples of how the Dutch traders were not always able to negotiate this trading process successfully, and of how the cultural encounters engendered by this commercial engagement could be the cause of deep tensions and indeed of outright hostility. Before I move on to these episodes, however, let me extend what I have been describing until now with a couple of further examples from *De Zon* which, while conforming in many of their primary elements with the basic pattern of experience that I have described above, nevertheless shed a more complex and ambiguous light on what might otherwise seem to be a somewhat mundane affair.

The sojourn at Toullicr had been fairly uneventful and free of mishap, although Truter had certainly not been able to acquire a sufficient complement of slaves. If he possessed any prior trading experience, or if he had consulted previous journals, he would have realized that this was more often the case than not and would thus have viewed his next move as fairly standard procedure. *De Zon* set sail on 12 June and on 16 June they dropped anchor at Morondave, another established polity with whom the VOC had previous contact¹²⁴. As would be expected, they were approached by the local inhabitants in two canoes, who took news of their arrival back to shore. The following day, when the two merchants went ashore they met with one of the local “makelaars”, named Jannicque, who informed them that their king resided four days journey inland and that if they wished to trade they would probably be required to travel to meet with him¹²⁵. In this situation, then, the physical factor of geography and the cultural factor of the king’s prerogative combined to determine a different course of proceedings to those that had been experienced at Toullicr. Because king Joema had lived only one day’s journey from the shore, he had been willing to undertake the journey himself; in addition, and of far greater importance to the merchants, there was not a significant delay before negotiations were conducted and the trade began. In this

¹²⁴ CA C 2255, ff. 6-7.

¹²⁵ For some unexplained reason, Truter neglects to indicate the name of this king in any of the relevant journal entries. Hence, I refer to him from now on simply as “the king of Morondave”.

situation, however, not only would a much longer delay be inevitable, but the Dutch would be obliged to undertake a journey inland themselves, a journey in which Truter was to be confronted with the uncertainties of an alien geographical and cultural environment.

Here one can begin to see different conceptions of time and necessity creating an atmosphere in which tensions between the two communities, the one terrestrial and the other seaborne, could begin to take root. As Truter is a fairly restrained narrator, particularly in comparison with the far more outraged and incensed Krause, he is generally not overtly explicit in expressing his grievances, despite the fact that the Malagasy would have had no access to his written confessions. Perhaps he did not wish to appear incompetent, as a victim of local conditions and circumstances; and given that Krause's voluble outpourings certainly diminishes his sense of personal capacity and ability in the eyes of this reader, Truter continues to maintain an air of professionalism which in his predecessor becomes increasingly lacking. Nevertheless, Truter does admit to challenges and difficulties in the performance of his duties, and the first major example occurs at this juncture in the narrative.

On 18 June, after messengers were dispatched as per custom with a small gift for the king, Truter went on to ask Jannicque if they could begin to build the Factory while they waited for the monarch's reply¹²⁶. Truter would no doubt have recognized that concluding negotiations at Morondave would entail a more lengthy period than it had at Toulhier; if they had to wait for a return message bearing an invitation to a royal audience, then undertake a journey of several days, contract with the monarch, return and only then be able to start building the Factory, the entire process would take what to the Dutch would have seemed an inordinate amount of time. Their constant intention at every stop they made was, ultimately, to obtain as many slaves in as short an amount of time for as reasonable a price as was possible; in this, they would have been adhering to Company prerogative and trading practice. To spend possibly more than a week just to obtain an accord, before they could even start with the trading process itself, would not doubt have seemed to Truter to be testing the bounds of his official responsibilities to the Company, never mind his own patience. By beginning

¹²⁶ CA C 2255, f. 8.

work on the Factory while awaiting the king's summons, he would have been able to salvage a significant amount of time that otherwise would have been lost, while still remaining faithful to the culture of trade that was maintained on the island. He would thus probably have seen an agreement by the Malagasy to this proposal as not only reasonable, but fair.

Clearly, the locals did not see things in the same light. Truter had indicated that they wished to make speedy progress and thus to erect the Factory as quickly as possible; this reasoning, however, appears to have born little resonance with the "makelaar". His reply was that until they had received word from the king they would not permitted to undertake any building, but would just have to wait. Although Truter does not record his immediate response towards this attitude, he clearly was frustrated by Jannicque's apparent intransigence, for the following day he approached him again with the same request. On this occasion, he attempted to support his proposal by appealing to what he claimed had been local practice and policy by arguing that on a previous voyage the merchants had been permitted to construct the Factory before receiving an official summons from the king. There would thus appear to be a contradiction between past and present Malagasy attitudes towards allowing the Dutch to take a certain initiative on sovereign soil without the monarch's direct permission. This discrepancy suggests three possibilities: firstly, that Truter was bluffing and that there was no such precedent in the VOC's trading experience on the island; secondly, that Jannicque was an intransigent man who perhaps wished to exert his authority over these foreign visitors, or was otherwise ignorant of the monarch's attitude and unwilling to take any direct initiative without a definitive royal mandate; and thirdly, that official policy had been altered since the occasion alleged by Truter, and that the king now insisted on granting royal approval before any such operation could be undertaken. As Truter does not specify the date or occasion on which this more relaxed attitude was in evidence, it is difficult to evaluate the veracity of his claims. Whatever the truth may be, his request was once again denied, and he was urged to be patient. Jannicque no doubt urged patience as Truter's agitation must have been visible, and he had deliberately confronted the "makelaar" with the accusation that the time they were spending idly awaiting the king's instructions was fruitless.

One has to surmise, to a certain extent, why it was that Jannicque viewed Truter's request with disfavour. I have mentioned the possibility that he was merely being obstinate and that he wished to aggravate the Dutch; but this seems unlikely, as it could easily have wounded his reputation with the Europeans and thus reduced the prospect of there being any trade. Had he allowed his own surly nature to cause a rupture with the Dutch merchants, then he would no doubt have been at the receiving end of the king's wrath. This, and the fact that all previous and subsequent relations between the merchants and Jannicque appear to be perfectly amicable, would suggest that the "makelaar" was not dismissing Truter's request on his own volition, but was reflecting wider social and political attitudes of the local populace. Very possibly, the attitude of Jannicque and his contemporaries towards time would have been different to that of the Dutch; he may have found it difficult to grasp the merchants' repeated protestations as to their need to conduct the trade in as short an amount of time as possible, as local practices of trade and barter would not have shared such a rigid temporal frame as their reference. In this way, he would not have comprehended the full implications of what Truter had been saying to him, perhaps even ascribing it to banter on the merchant's part. At any rate, the coastal Malagasy societies evidently did not regard rapid negotiation and trade as a priority in the way that the Dutch did; the (to the merchants) slow rate of trade repeatedly recorded in both voyages would corroborate this. Of course, they would have seen it in their interests to ensure that the Dutch remained in the vicinity for as long as they could¹²⁷. Thus, one of the ironies of this trading encounter is that the means by which the Malagasy would sometimes seek to prolong their trade with the Europeans would be the very cause cited by the Dutch merchants as their reason for moving on in search of more profitable prospects.

However, even if the locals did possess a different conception of time and so did not necessarily appreciate the full extent of the Europeans' urgency, this still does not itself explain why Jannicque declined permission to build the Factory to the traders. It might clarify his apparent bemusement at Truter's insistence, but one would think that even had they not been possessed of a similar urgency they would still not wish to delay the beginning of the trading process. The reason has to lie within the social and

¹²⁷ Even if the Dutch were not buying slaves from the locals, they would still have been purchasing provisions from them on a regular basis. This in itself would have provided an incentive for the Malagasy to keep them there as long as possible, particularly if their slave supply was limited and they required alternative means to obtain a profit from this encounter.

political structure of this community itself, particularly in its conceptions of the relations between the king and his subjects, and between the king and his officials. As Jannicque himself said, nothing could be done *until word had reached them from the king*; and if my first supposition is true, and Jannicque was being difficult purely for his own perverted satisfaction, then he still used the king's authority as his excuse.

At this point, let me attempt to describe, as far as is possible, the structure of kingship and royal authority that pertained on the west coast of Madagascar at this time. I have already mentioned that the terms employed in the journals to describe local authority figures reflect attempts by the European merchants to comprehend, and hence interact with, a local social reality in a vocabulary that was familiar to them. Hence, such terms as are employed in the journals cannot simply be accepted at face value. Nevertheless, the merchants were certainly perceiving a very definite social structure of hierarchy and royal authority in their commercial interactions, an authority that was no less authentic by virtue of its unfamiliarity to these European witnesses; and thus, Truter's (and, of course, Krause's) interpretations of this authority do provide clues, if not complete unfettered access, to what constituted locally accepted notions of legitimate sovereignty in western Madagascar during the latter half of the 18th century.

Drawing on the variety of descriptions contained in the journals, it seems that during these decades the west Madagascan coast comprised of a large number of small communities, communities that, although governed by separate sovereigns, yet comprised a significant degree of cultural homogeneity, and that affected a variety of social relationships between them. While the descriptions of the various communities in both journals are, by virtue of their discourse, quite formulaic, one is nevertheless impressed by the substantial degree of similarity between the divergent polities that are described in them. Despite the clear formulas of representation, one suspects that had there been differences of a significant degree, that these differences would somehow have found their way into the journals, even if inadvertently. The descriptions of kings and their retinues, and indeed the replication of practices of commercial diplomacy right along the coast, suggests that while the local Malagasy were not bound by a distinct, overarching political authority or state as such, they nevertheless shared much in common with regard to political practice at a local level.

To contextualize these observations, it is of course necessary to draw on secondary material by scholars who have devoted attention to local political economy in Madagascar in the 18th century. Unfortunately, there is not much accessible literature in English, and that which is available does not concern itself explicitly with the west coast during the 1760s and 1770s. There are two scholars whose work is of some, albeit limited value. The first, Pier Larson, has already been encountered within these pages, while the second is Raymond Kent, a historian and anthropologist who has been acknowledged as an authority on Malagasy society. Kent has published a book entitled *Early Kingdoms in Madagascar 1500-1700*; despite its promising title, however, it is largely a linguistic and ethnographic analysis of the formation of particular kingdoms, and does not provide much in the way of a description of concrete political practice and social interaction within these kingdoms. The study, as its title indicates, is also limited to the 16th and 17th centuries, and so does not extend directly to the period under discussion.

Despite the fact that Larson's study is concerned with the formation of the Merina, some of his general observations of local political authority in the Madagascan highlands are pertinent to this discussion, particularly in comparison to the journals' descriptions. Larson describes the society of the highlands in 1770 (roughly contemporaneous with the voyages of *De Neptunus* and *De Zon*) as comprising of "minikingdoms", centred on a capital that was surrounded by a number of affiliated villages¹²⁸. The highlands were therefore politically fragmented; while there were four "kingdoms" as such, rural communities could, in varying degrees, exercise autonomy in deciding in which direction they would direct their political loyalties¹²⁹. Thus, while a number of larger polities were developing and encompassing smaller communities within their ambit, lesser polities maintained a degree of political independence and could constitute themselves along the lines of family and kin.

The Malagasy of the west are often designated as the Sakalava, a large kingdom that emerged during the 16th and 17th centuries¹³⁰. Kent, in a chapter devoted to the

¹²⁸ Larson, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement*, p. 89.

¹²⁹ Ibid. p. 90.

¹³⁰ Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, pp. 19, 22, 25-26.

Sakalava, associates them with the Morondave region when he recounts the arrival of two European merchants to the community settled at the river in 1703¹³¹. After having attained their peak in the middle of the 18th century, the direct political presence of the Sakalava began to decline, although a certain sense of cultural continuity continued to inform the communities in the west¹³². Many of the communities south of Morondave, however, engaged in different political structures to those prevalent in the regions directly under Sakalava control, although the presence of diverse cultural influences within all of these societies must be included in one's historical perception of the region¹³³.

Gwyn Campbell claims that in the early 19th century the communities of the south, in relative contrast to those of the Sakalava, were organized according to decentralized political structures¹³⁴. As the trade practices described by Campbell here are strikingly similar to those that I have described in Chapter 1, it is probable that there was a large degree of political continuity in this region between the late 18th and early 19th centuries. If so, then this would partly explain the apparently decentralized political structures along the coast that is evident from the sources. Drawing on the records, one can construct a model of a number of autonomous or semi-autonomous polities sharing concrete cultural links and practices; this would also adhere to the model, alluded to briefly by Campbell and explored in more detail by Larson, of a fragmented political economy, but one that shares certain cultural assumptions reflective of a common worldview. Nevertheless, as Robert Ross points out, the regions of Morondave and the Maningaare River were dominated by Sakalava monarchies, although these monarchies would have been in a period of decline and gradual disintegration during the 1760s and 1770s. Thus, the sovereign that Truter was to encounter in Morondave was most likely a Sakalava monarch of some description¹³⁵, while a king such as Joema in the Toulrier region may be representative of a more independent form of monarchy. The fact that the merchants do not mention large states such as the Sakalava explicitly in their records, but refer only to individual

¹³¹ Kent, *Early Kingdoms in Madagascar 1500-1700*, p. 201.

¹³² Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, p. 111; Ross, 'The Dutch on the Swahili Coast, 1776-1778: Two Slaving Journals, Part 1', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 19, 2, p. 313.

¹³³ Campbell, 'Madagascar and the Slave Trade (1810-1895)', *Omalý Sy Anio*, 17-20, p. 301.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ross, 'The Dutch on the Swahili Coast, 1776-1778: Two Slaving Journals, Part 1', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 19, 2, p. 313.

monarchs, makes it difficult to ascertain, particularly in this period of Sakalava decline, the extent to which particular polities were affiliated to the larger Sakalava kingdoms.

The absolute authority of the king is something that strikes one as you are reading the journals, and it brings to mind the comments made by Kent in relation to the arrival of a Dutch vessel, the *Barneveld*, to the Sakalava community at Menabe in 1719¹³⁶. The Dutch were impressed by the absolute power wielded by the king, Romeny, over his subjects, a power that suggested a divine mandate for his royal status¹³⁷. While the “kings” described in my narrative may not have possessed this degree of authority, they nevertheless exhibited a similar manner about them, which suggests that although their territories were constituted on a smaller scale, they shared assumptions of royal authority and status that were held in common by the sovereigns of the large Sakalava polities. While the narratives of the merchants are necessarily restricted and conditioned by the norms of the dissimilar culture in which they were rooted, they do appear to accurately represent a royal consciousness that has been noted by scholars such as Kent. Of course, the quasi-religious terms used by the narrators that Kent draws on are again reflective of European cultural norms through which their experiences of this royal constitution were interpreted. The vesting of royal authority directly in the king’s person, however, would appear to be an accurate description of the relationship between the king and his subjects.

Larson makes a distinction between different terms for authority figures that will assist in clarifying more exactly what kinds of sovereigns the merchants are referring to in the journals. The general Malagasy term for a sovereign or ruler during this time was *mpanjaka*, which simply designated a person who was vested with some form of authority¹³⁸. Perhaps the Dutch were cohering to such linguistic codes by referring to the sovereign they encountered with an equally generic term in their own language. However, Larson draws a distinction between larger kingdoms and minikingdoms and smaller, more socially cohesive descent groups that he labels *firenena*¹³⁹. These *firenena* could incorporate smaller kinship groups called *teraky*, while the kingdoms

¹³⁶ Kent, *Early Kingdoms in Madagascar 1500-1700*, p. 202.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Larson, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement*, p. 91.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 90.

and minikingdoms would do the same for the *firenena*; however, as I noted above, many rural communities exercised their own autonomy as to where to direct their allegiance, and so could retain, in certain circumstances, at least a partial independence from larger polities¹⁴⁰.

Thus, while a generic term for ruler did exist in the Malagasy cultural vocabulary, Larson goes on to provide his own distinction between “kings”, who ruled over kingdoms and minikingdoms, and “chiefs”, whose authority was restricted to *firenena* and *teraky* communities¹⁴¹. Considering the descriptions contained in the journals, I would argue that the “kings” referred to frequently by the merchants would translate most accurately as “chiefs” in Larson’s use of the term, “chiefs” of communities that correlate roughly to *firenena* as opposed to *teraky* communities. Larson claims that *firenena* communities could range between several hundred to thousands of persons, a variation that seems in accordance with the populations of the communities that the merchants came into contact with¹⁴². It is difficult to ascertain whether any of these polities were incorporated into larger kingdoms, such as the more extensive Sakalava polities; however, the degree of independence that is implied in the descriptions, and the autonomy exercised by the relative kings/chiefs in their commercial activities, suggests that they were by and large a series of interconnected but independent chiefdoms, reflective of the decentralized political pattern alluded to by Campbell.

The officers and crew waited for another five days, doing little else besides obtaining provisions and gathering water and wood from the shoreline. The only relief to what otherwise must have been an incredibly trying period for Truter and his men had come on 19 June, the day that Truter had his second conversation with Jannicque about building the Factory¹⁴³. After refusing Truter a second time, the “makelaar” had attempted to soften the blow (providing additional evidence that he was not purposefully seeking to aggravate his visitors) by adding that he had requested of the

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. pp. 90 and 91.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 91.

¹⁴² Ibid. Although the Dutch never mention exact figures, the fact that a “king” was typically sovereign over a number of towns including his capital, and as he was always accompanied by a large retinue that included a substantial phalanx of soldiers and as a small cadre of senior officials, suggests that a typical community of dependents can be generally numbered within this range. None of the polities described within these journals would appear to have attained the scale of a kingdom as such.

¹⁴³ CA C 2255, ff. 8-9.

king to start sending slaves to the shore, and also petitioning him that they keep to the same accord as had been agreed to in previous years. Possibly Jannicque was as exasperated by the delay as were his European clients, and was attempting to make the best of a tense situation while remaining loyal to his sovereign and to the royal obligations that had been entrusted to him. What this did mean was that, provided the request was acceptable to the monarch, the Dutch would be able to start trading before any royal audience took place, and that they would be permitted to building the Factory once the messenger had returned.

While the intervening five days brought little comfort to the chaffing traders, on 25 June they received a message that must have provided some relief to their irritated condition¹⁴⁴. They received the messenger, who had been sent to them by Jannicque in a canoe, on board ship, where he informed them that the king's envoys had returned. Returning with the bearer to the shore, they received the gratifying news that the king had agreed to trade with them, and that he had personally sent a slave to them with which they could begin. Two days later, on 27 June, they met with a Captain Remauw, who reported to them that the king (the Dutch word "vorst", or prince, is used in this extract, indicating again the interchangeability of Dutch terms for Malagasy monarchs) had agreed both to trade as per the accord of the previous year and to the building of the Factory¹⁴⁵. Clearly, then, a Dutch expedition had been made to the region the previous year, and so the links with this polity were probably about as established as were those with Toulrier; and Jannicque's representations on their behalf regarding the Factory had been met with the king's approval, resulting in a certain, although perhaps still qualified, return to amicable relations.

As the merchants no doubt expected, the king's message was not here concluded. After stating his willingness to trade, he requested of them (the word request, of course, possessing relative meanings¹⁴⁶) to travel in his direction and meet with him at a place of his choosing. One might be tempted to ask for what reason the monarch still insisted on meeting with the merchants, as he had already agreed to trade by an

¹⁴⁴ CA C 2255, f. 10.

¹⁴⁵ CA C 2255, ff. 11-12.

¹⁴⁶ The way in which the word is used in the text may be translated as an expression for a royal summons; not an act of aggressive imposition as such, but certainly a directive for attendance at a customary ritual that the European officials would be expected, as a correlative to their being granted permission to trade, to dispatch a delegation.

established accord; and part of the reason must lie in the conditions pertaining to his request. He asked them to meet him in a royal audience so as to present him personally with gifts; indeed, he deemed the audience to be so important that although he was not prepared to travel all the way to the Dutch vessel, he had mobilized his people and had been marching in their direction for three days, with the obvious intention of meeting them at a halfway point.

Although a small gift had already been dispatched to the king with the original messenger, he evidently still insisted on receiving the merchants as well as more substantial gifts personally. While it can safely be presumed that this second collection of gifts would have been of a significantly larger size and superior quality than the first, one should not presume that the king was purely organizing this audience purely for the sake of material acquisition. Although the monarchs were not shy to vent their displeasure should they consider their gifts to be inadequate or inferior¹⁴⁷, and thus did consider the goods to possess a definite value, if the king had desired the goods alone he could have devised a means of acquiring them that would have involved less hassle than a royal audience such as the one that he was proposing. Rather, the king must have seen the personal attendance of the Dutch merchants as of equal, perhaps even greater, significance to his audience than the mere provision of the gifts themselves. Thus, it would seem that it was the audience itself that was of primary consequence; despite the fact that a price had been agreed upon and that there was thus no immediate practical necessity for the king and the merchant to meet, the act of holding a royal audience in which the foreigners would be welcomed and their gifts personally received was to this monarch (and, indeed, to many of his contemporaries) of crucial importance if the “good relations” between the VOC and his kingdom were to be maintained.

Truter does not record any direct personal impressions of this request; he was probably more relieved than anything else that official permission had been granted for the trade to begin. It is in a situation such as this that one begins to see the significance of the decision taken to dispatch two merchants on this voyage, rather

¹⁴⁷ For example, Boucher describes how when the officers of *De Brak* made contact with King Rammanrasse at Toulir, he “expressed the hope that the Dutch would not be as niggardly with gifts as they had been in the previous year”. See Boucher, ‘The Voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742’ *Historia*, 24, 1, p. 53.

than just one, and why whenever they could the VOC would appoint at least two merchant officials for any significant trading expedition. As the commercial representative of the expedition, Truter was now required by local custom to abandon what were his immediate responsibilities to the Company, those of overseeing the trade, and inhabit a ceremonial role that was expected of him within the framework of coastal Malagasy royal etiquette. In a certain sense, Truter was thus a hostage to his particular circumstances; it was a double bind, for to retain trade links with this polity and thus fulfill his obligations as representative of the Company he was compelled to abandon for a time the other significant aspect of his responsibilities, that of ensuring a smooth and profitable trade. However, it would now be possible to enact a delegation of duties; and in effect, what could now happen is that for this period Truter would assume the responsibility of the Company's official envoy to the Malagasy, while Paddenburg, his junior, would act as the expedition's primary trading representative. This had not been possible for Krause, and perhaps goes some way to explaining his frustration and sense of personal impotence. Now, the official obligations invested by the VOC in a particular title could be divided between two representatives, each bearing a particular measure of those obligations. It is thus understandable that Truter would accept the king's summons without causing much of a fuss; he could oversee the crucial task of enacting the ceremonial relationship between the VOC and the king, while his partner could still maintain the commercial transactions upon which this relationship was founded.

One can also note that for the purposes of the royal audience the monarch was willing to make a compromise with respect to their mutual traveling arrangements. Given the greater distance between the ship and the king's residence than that which had existed at Toulrier, he had not decided to undertake, as King Joema had done, the overland journey in its entirety. Nevertheless, he had indicated himself willing to tackle a good proportion of that journey and had in fact already embarked, in the company of a large retinue and in expectation that the Dutch would honour their side of the invitation. In this he was doing the Europeans something of a service, by halving the distance that they would have to travel; and while he was acting within the bounds of his royal prerogative, and naturally expecting the merchants to honour this prerogative, it does something to reveal how important he considered this audience to be. While in many senses the Dutch merchants were subordinate to the kings' authority when in his

territory, and had to submit all their intentions for his approval, from both these examples it becomes possible to see that in other respects they perceived the VOC as partners, even in a sovereign sense. For the king to be willing to move court on account of *De Zon*'s arrival indicates his perception of a certain mutuality and ceremonial and political equality; and while this was not maintained throughout all the interactions that VOC merchants were to experience on the island, it reveals that these monarchs saw the trade developing between themselves and the VOC as of significant commercial and, indeed, political value.

Whether Truter was pleased or irritated at the prospect of traveling into the interior, he does not say; given that the commercial responsibilities of the expedition would be ably taken care of, it is possible that he treated the prospect of a journey into this still largely unknown land with some anticipation. Either way, he readily agreed to the trip without any recorded protestations; and it was decided that Truter and those officers he had selected to accompany him (the remainder would have been subject to Paddenburg until Truter's return) would sail along the north shore in the "schuijt" following a canoe bearing the two "makelaars" Jannicque and Sinkassa. This agreement was made on 27 June¹⁴⁸; and between then and 3 July, when the upper-merchant and his companions embarked on the journey, the Factory was completed and paid for, the Company goods were brought across and the slave trading began in earnest¹⁴⁹.

Truter relinquished control of the Factory to Paddenburg on 2 July¹⁵⁰. In so doing he relinquished too the role of commercial representative and assumed in his person that of political and ceremonial emissary. The day before, he and Paddenburg had selected the gifts to be given to the king, a task that, as has been seen, they usually performed in unison; these gifts were approved by the "makelaars" on the 2nd, after they had come aboard *De Zon* to inspect them. Satisfied that the king would be content with what had been prepared for him, Truter made the final arrangements with Jannicque, after which the "makelaar" departed; and it was probably with a mixture of

¹⁴⁸ CA C 2255, ff. 11-12.

¹⁴⁹ CA C 2255, ff. 12-16.

¹⁵⁰ CA C 2255, f. 15.

excitement and trepidation, that inevitable cocktail of emotions that accompanies the traveler on his journey into the unknown, that he took to his bed.

The journey was to take four days¹⁵¹. Although it was in many respects another cooperative venture between the Dutch and the local Malagasy, it was one in which the former were almost entirely dependent on the skills and competence of the latter. It would be interesting to view such a journey as this as a counterpoint to the cultural encounters that arose from the sailors and the local Malagasy building the Factory together; for while the latter was an encounter between the respective “commoners”, for lack of a better term, of both communities, the former was its equivalent but occurring between the higher ranks of these distinct polities. In this dependent relationship, Truter and his men would perhaps have found themselves in a position of some discomfort; as loyal officials of the Company they were expected to hold their own and emerge from this encounter with the Company’s interests ascendant, while the very fact that they were traveling into what was still an alien land, to be subjected to the customs and courtly expectations of a foreign culture, would no doubt have engendered some sense of personal vulnerability.

To accompany him Truter had selected two of his officers, “*onderstuurman*” Jacob Tromp and the Tolk Cornelis¹⁵². The party thus consisted of five people, three Europeans and two Malagasy, with Truter, Tromp and Cornelis comprised the European component, and Jannicque and Sinkassa that of the locals. It must be presumed that the two “makelaars” had delegated the responsibility of trade to one of the local Captains, who would broker slave sales with Paddenburg in their absence. The party set sail before daybreak on 3 July.

I include the details of this journey, for it provides for an intriguing account of the expeditions that European slave traders would on occasion make into the interior of Madagascar at this time. While such journeys never took the traders more than a few days journey inland, they provide both for fascinating details as to the experience of these foreigners in Madagascar, as well as further illustrations of the nature of the

¹⁵¹ The journey is narrated in the entries for 3-6 July, CA C 2255, ff. 16-17.

¹⁵² As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the “tolk” was the translator, who would obviously accompany the merchant on an expedition of this kind.

relationships developing between the official representatives of these culturally dissimilar societies. This time, of course, such interplay was transposed into a divergent paradigm from that to which the traders would by now have grown accustomed, one in which they would be more acutely exposed to the physical and cultural environment of the west coast Malagasy societies. The repercussions of such profound cultural encounters are not of a single order; and while a journey such as this could enable each party to more fully appreciate the moments of contact with the other, it could also reveal the fault lines that had slowly been germinating between the two societies, and thereby kindle as much bitterness as friendship.

They sailed along the north shore without any eventuality, until at 4:00 in the afternoon they came to what appears to be a pair of twin rivers, labeled by Truter as the Loena and the Manie. It was up the latter river that Jannicque directed the “schuijt”, and they sailed along its banks for a further quarter of a mile. Truter describes seeing three canoes at the mouth of the two rivers, and another when they had sailed the quarter mile, apparently with its rowers “struggling in the deep water”. The mouth of the rivers must then have been a place of some activity, and perhaps even the site of a settlement, although Truter does not record seeing one in the vicinity. The reference to “deep waters” would also suggest that the river was of some magnitude and that it contained strong currents. Thus, it could well be that the Manie River was one of the primary natural connections between the interior settlements and the coastal regions of the Morondave kingdom, and that it was for this reason that the king had selected a position close to its banks as the most suitable location to hold his audience. Waterways, of course, have throughout human history frequently been the primary conduits of trade, communication and cultural encounter, and it is therefore appropriate that Truter and his men would be embarking on their cross-cultural venture by means of such a thoroughfare.

After spending the night camped in tents near the mouth of the rivers, the party recommenced their journey early the following morning. Perhaps they had returned to the shore from their position upstream, for Truter records that they entered the Manie River at 8:00 that morning; this would also explain his claim that they had spent the night “at the mouth of the two rivers”. They sailed, again without any incident, until midday; however, in the afternoon a strong wind picked up and began to threaten their

sails, and they were forced to pull over to the bank for the remainder of the day. Their efforts to make rapid progress having thus been hampered by local weather conditions, the company bowed to fate and elected to bed down for the night.

The probability that this river was a major transport and communication channel is reinforced by the events that occurred that evening. While the party was making preparations to spend yet another night on the rough banks of the river, a group of locals arrived from a nearby town. After conversing with the members of the expedition, Jannicque and Sinkassa selected three of them and sent them off on foot to report their progress to the king. It is not recorded whether these locals had been summoned by the “makelaars” or whether they had merely been passing by, although the implication one gets from Truter’s wording is that it is more likely to have been the latter than the former. Two observations can be made from this: firstly, the evident proximity of settlements to the river’s edge and, secondly, the weight of the authority that was invested in the “makelaars” over the citizens of the king’s domain. The first point need not be laboured much more than it has been already; the fact that settlements had sprung up along what was a primary medium of transportation is, of course, not particularly remarkable. This merely serves to reinforce what I noted earlier, that local monarchs, whose established centres of power were always concentrated on an inland residence, used rivers, of which there are many along the west Madagascan coast, as significant conduits of communication, trade, transport and thereby of royal presence and authority. This last point relates back to my second observation, that of the evident authority of the “makelaars” over these riverside communities. Royal authority and patronage would have extended along such primary transport networks and was facilitated, as has been seen, by the king’s appointed officials, represented in this instance by the “makelaars”. The fact that the three men appointed by the “makelaars” to carry their message to the king did so without any evident protest would indicate that royal sovereignty was fully established beyond the king’s residence town, and that the local inhabitants firmly respected and were subordinate to the authority vested in his officers by the king.

Incidents like this enable one to slowly fill in the picture of how these mini-kingdoms operated. What would seem to be the prevailing norm during the latter half of the 18th century is the existence of small centralized polities, governed by monarchs who

inhabited residences some distance into the interior, whose power radiated along established transport routes and communication networks and was mediated by a diverse range of officials. These officials were differentiated in their relationships to the king and in their relationships with each other; they were appointed to a variety of locations throughout the territory, there to ensure that the king's word was obeyed and that the effective functioning of the royal institutions was maintained. It is not at all clear whether those officials appointed to oversee the beach were inferior in rank and authority to those in closer geographical proximity to the throne; there is little contact between different officials recorded in the journals, and certainly none of outright conflict. What is more likely is that the different officials possessed a similar status in rank but were demarcated and labeled by their Dutch observers in terms of their geographic relationship with the throne, and that any overlap in responsibility and jurisdiction was infrequent. Although the "makelaars" are primarily associated with the geographical sphere of the beach in the journals, and hence have been represented as such to this point in my descriptions, it is clear from Jannicque's conduct here that their authority could be extended when they were forced to travel; and although their primary sphere of responsibility may have been the beach, their authority was invested more in their persons than in any fixed geographic entity, and thus provided them with some flexibility to ensure that the king's interests were honoured throughout his territory.

The expedition's progress continued to be slow. After spending the night in similar fashion to when they had arrived at the mouth of the rivers, they set off again early on the morning of the 5th, rowing steadily upstream. Their pace was slower than that of the previous day, with the rowers forced to pull against strong downstream currents. Fortunately the strong wind that had whipped up the previous day must have slackened, for they were able to continue rowing until evening. By nightfall they had reached a spot from which the "makelaars" claimed they would be able to march the rest of the distance overland. This must have been of some relief to the rowers, who for the previous two days had certainly not had an easy time of it. Truter does not record who these rowers were; but as the "schuijt" was a light but fairly substantial vessel, and as one suspects that Truter and his officers would have been unwilling, not to mention unable (given the fact that there were only three of them), to exert themselves in such a physically draining exercise, it is likely that the rowers consisted

of a party of local Malagasy. Perhaps some of the European sailors were also included; although one suspects that had they been then Truter would have made some mention of it, as he does for the Tolk and the *onderstuurman*.

Truter's descriptions of his journeys, like those of Krause, are noticeably devoid of direct geographical details, of estimations of distance and of descriptions of the natural environment. As most merchants were men with little or no direct maritime experience, it is probable that the majority of them were unable to effectively plot or chart a journey, be it overland or by sea, with any degree of accuracy. The vagueness that clouds this aspect of the narrative serves to illumine what Truter, for all the apparent confidence of his prose, can never quite conceal; that here, in a far greater degree than at any point before this, his utter dependence on his native benefactors was absolute. Had he been abandoned at some point along the way (the possibility, of course, would have been so unlikely as to be close to negligible), it would have been with great difficulty that he would have been able to retrace his steps; and once he was beyond the riverbank, even these slight chances would have been substantially reduced. His lack of any specific geographical or topographical references would seem to suggest that he really did not know where he was going; had he possessed more than a rudimentary navigational knowledge he may have been more able to accurately plot the route that he was following. As it was he was being led, much as a blind man is led by a guide dog; and while in this case the guide could be trusted, the follower appears to be nowhere near as aware of his position or the nature of the surrounding environment as one would expect from a senior maritime officer. Given the paucity of his descriptions, it would prove difficult to retrace the route adopted by this expedition; and furthermore, one is forced to imagine to a large extent both the presence of the terrain and the impressions and sentiments that it would have evoked for Truter and his officers.

It was now evening, and so it was decided to delay the commencement of their overland journey to the following day. As it turned out, they were forced to remain at the bank for a substantial part of the following morning as well while they awaited the arrival of messengers from the king, who would inform them of the exact location where they would be expected. At 10:00 these messengers arrived, and informed Truter and the "makelaars" that they must make their way to a particular valley,

which would be recognized by Sinkassa, where the royal audience was to be held. The route to this valley lay across a marsh; while this marsh is not described in any further detail, it is clear that it did prove a formidable obstacle, for Truter describes how the members of the expedition were forced to walk in single file between some bushes on what must have been a narrow strip of dry land. Again, the Europeans were carefully guided across this marsh; and while Truter's descriptions remain as sketchy as ever, the picture he draws does not provide for a complimentary portrait of the local environment.

Truter next describes walking through a forest, although he is not clear whether this forest was in some way an extension of the marsh, or whether it spread from some distance beyond it. What is clear is that this was an area characterized by substantial natural growth, and that it must have been fairly well watered. It is probable that the forest extended on beyond the marsh, for Truter seems to imply that their progress was easier here than it had been previously in the day. It is not recorded at what time they finally arrived in the valley, but presumably it must have been late afternoon or evening for, barring the dispatch of a further group of messengers to report their arrival to the king, nothing further was to happen that day. It is also possible that the king had exercised his prerogative and delayed the audience to the following day, and that Truter would thus not have been able to commence negotiations at once even if he had wished to. Truter was likely to have been exhausted after the physically demanding journey of the previous few days, and although it entailed another delay he was probably content and even relieved (although he does not admit as much) to spend whatever remained of the day at rest.

As they were not meeting the king at his official residence but rather in what is suggested to have been an uninhabited valley, the Europeans would not have been allocated a fixed dwelling such as they would have been had they met him at his court. Although their mutual traveling arrangements had shortened the party's traveling time somewhat (and, given the frequent delays that had held the group up Truter must now have been even more grateful that the monarch had been so willing to undertake some of the distance himself), it did entail a rather less comfortable sojourn than they might otherwise have enjoyed. It is likely that they were compelled to pitch their tents yet again and spend the night on the valley's rough surface.

Certainly the merchant did not spend his evening in or even near the king's own accommodation; had he done so he would undoubtedly have made mention of it in his journal. As it was, the king would also have been compelled by the circumstances governing this audience to spend the night in rather rougher conditions than those to which he would have been accustomed; and it is unlikely that his tents would have been any more comfortable than those of the Europeans.

Waking up on the morning of 7 July, both parties are likely to have been groggy and somewhat irritated; and subsequent events were not to improve moods much, at least as far as the Dutch merchant was concerned¹⁵³. The “makelaars” are not again mentioned as such until their departure a few days later; and it is probable that whatever authority they may have possessed was largely circumvented in this environment by that invested in other of the king's officials, and that they thus deferred to these others over the course of the next two days. Early in the morning Truter arranged the presents in such a fashion that they would have been acceptable to the monarch; he would have wanted to present them in a manner whereby they would adequately symbolize the VOC's recognition of and respect towards the king. It would seem that the king and his retinue had been camped at some distance from Truter, for he writes that at 10:00 he saw a large company of Malagasy emerging from the forest and approaching the position where he was awaiting them. It is possible that the king and his entourage had been encamped some distance from the valley, and that they had started marching again early that day to arrive in the valley at mid-morning. This could be another reason that Truter had not been summoned to the king's presence on his immediate arrival, but had rather dispatched messengers as they had done at previous stops. While the king had also been on the move for a good number of days, the fact that he had been accompanied by such a large retinue that included, as it later turned out, his wives, he would have made slower progress than Truter's swifter and more mobile party. It is probable that the Europeans and the “makelaars” traversed a larger distance than the monarch, although given the lack of navigational data in the journal this is impossible to say for sure.

¹⁵³ CA C 2255, ff. 17-20.

The king's company came to a still position, and it was now Truter's turn to approach. If he had entertained any hopes that on this occasion ceremony might be snubbed at, or even just toned down a little, then they were immediately dashed; for as he made his way towards the king a number of the attendants signaled his advance by blowing vigorously on trumpets and horns. Accompanied by this fanfare, Truter was ushered in to the king's presence, together with his presents. (He does not specify who had the responsibility for ensuring the gifts' careful presentation, but it is probable that a number of the Malagasy from his party, perhaps even the "makelaars", acted as his bearers.) His description of the assembly bears much in common with that of King Joema, suggesting that a certain commonality in courtly ritual was in existence along a wide stretch of the west coast. Court was held in the open, with the king seated beneath a clutch of trees (interestingly, in all such assemblies the merchants describe the king specifically as seated beneath a tree; perhaps it was a matter of courtly protocol that the king never appear before an audience without some form of canopy). As with King Joema he was surrounded by a party of attendants and officials, while in a wider arc encircling the sovereign stood a large party of armed men. Thus were the three layers of the Malagasy court arranged: the monarch himself, centre of power and the audience's undivided attention, to be faced by his guest; in his immediate vicinity his officials and nobles, to assist when required and to bear added symbolic presence to the king's own; and beyond them the assemblage of armed guards, fulfilling the twin tasks of protecting the king from possible attack and maintaining constant vigilance, and fulfilling their symbolic and ceremonial function of asserting and representing the king's supreme authority. The king is unlikely to have expected any direct threat from Truter's quarter, and so this overt armed presence was no doubt as intended to inscribe the king's royal presence as it was to provide practical defense of his person.

During all the initial stages of this audience Truter was assuming a ceremonial posture that was subordinate to that of the king. It was a posture that was required of him by the conventions of this royal audience, conventions that situated him quite particularly in the role of envoy. If he had ever entertained the notion of affecting the aura of a monarch in his negotiations with local kings, then he would have swiftly been disabused of such illusions. In the eyes of this king, and of his neighbours up and down the coast, the Company merchant was never presumed to be invested with any

direct monarchical authority. Thus, while it would appear from his discourse that the king regarded the Company as trading partners and therefore as equals, he regarded the merchants as envoys, as servants of the monarchical power invested in the Company, and thus of subordinate, although certainly respected, status. This would explain the imbalance in the relationship between Truter and the king as it is manifested within this audience; as the host of this trading partnership the king had received the merchant much as would have the envoy of any other polity that wished to initiate or maintain relations, there to bestow on him particular trading rights and the promise of diplomatic relations. He would thus have perceived the merchant as his primary communications medium with the VOC, and the ceremonial impetus of this audience would have been to make manifest the king's presence and thereby to conjoin it with the VOC's own. By making Truter the object of these ceremonial conventions, then, the king was in effect recognizing the Company's autonomy and forging links between its sovereign authority and that which was invested within his own person.

The probability that Truter recognized himself as ambassador and envoy rather than as primary authority figure can also be argued for quite strongly. I have mentioned that when speaking with King Joema he never claimed to be negotiating on his own initiative but always made it clear that he was speaking in the name of the Company, and this performance was repeated here. He had greeted the king on behalf of the Company and not in his own capacity, and any pretensions to personal grandeur that he may have entertained remained well submerged. He would have been equally careful not to give cause for the king to take offence, and he certainly had no reason to do so; for although the ceremonial structure of the audience allocated him a subordinate space, he was in no way demeaned or degraded. He was required to fulfill a specific symbolic role, a role for which he would have been prepared both by precedent and by personal experience; and it was by means of his rigorously fulfilling the requirements of this role that diplomatic and commercial continuity would be ensured. It was certainly a position of some responsibility, replete with the possibility of misadventure; and as events would soon reveal, it was one that could not always be carried off with perfection.

Now that he had been gestured to sit, Truter was able to relax more completely; he would also have altered his position in relation to the king somewhat, and would now assume a role if not of complete equality then of a greater mutuality. This gesture would have indicated that the audience was assuming a different tone and that the two parties could now get on to business. Truter may have still been rather mystified as to what was now expected of him, as an agreement had already been reached to trade according to the previous year's accord. Hay may have expected them to merely ratify it, and thus satisfy courtly requirements for trade agreements to be stamped with the king's personal authority. This certainly was part of the king's purpose, although it would become clear that he entertained intentions beyond this. The purpose of this audience, it turned out, was not merely to ceremonially seal the trading relationship as it existed at present; it was to extend it into the future, according to a new set of principles and conditions for which Truter had evidently not prepared himself.

The monarch wished first to seal the accord for the trade that would take place that year. As the price had already been settled, and as a number of slaves had already been purchased according to this agreement, to Truter's probable relief no direct bargaining was necessary on this occasion. The existing accord that was ratified here was, for one male or female slave "zonder onderscheijde van jaaren", 2 pieces snaphanen, 50 pounds bussekruit, 10 pounds kogels and 50 pieces snaphaan steenen, or, for the equivalent, 100 pounds bussekruit in one vat. In fact, Truter must have been more than relieved at this arrangement, for it was a good deal kinder on the Dutch than the accord that had been imposed by King Joema: while they would have to part with the same numbers of "snaphanen" and "bussekruit", the amount of "kogels" and "snaphaan steenen" was halved; while the alternative, 100 pounds bussekruit in one vat, indicated a specific desire on the part of this king for gunpowder. This would suggest the possibility that this community possessed a substantial amount of firearms (although they were evidently not averse to the prospect of gaining more), but that they were experiencing shortages in gunpowder and perhaps in ammunition. Gunpowder and ammunition were also primary demands on Krause's voyage, leading him into substantial difficulties; and thus one can certainly say, if nothing else, that weapons sold along the west Madagascan coast were being kept in good use. As long as their weapons were maintained and continued to function effectively, and provided the number of warriors in a particular

community remained fairly constant, then the demand for guns would have slackened once each polity had sufficiently armed itself. On the other hand, there would have been a constant demand for gunpowder by those societies engaging in frequent warfare, and it is probable that, dependent as these societies were on their periodic trade with European vessels, that it was often in short supply; and if this was indeed the case, then the second part of this agreement would have been devised to convince the Dutch to part with larger amounts of gunpowder rather than the assortment of weaponry and associated items that comprised the customary payment. Interestingly, the king did not insist on being paid purely in gunpowder; as both Krause's record and the trade that was conducted here demonstrates, the Dutch were usually unwilling to trade only in one item, due largely to a limitation in their stores (the demands of the local market could change from year to year, which would be why they did bring such a broad variety of trade goods), and so the king probably realized that making gunpowder the only currency of exchange would lead to little gain.

Up to the time when Truter left *De Zon*, they had been trading according to the first part of the agreement; but after this, when he returned to the ship and the trade continued, they traded more frequently for the amount of gunpowder than for the guns and ammunition as well. Transactions in favour of gunpowder may have been determined by the wishes of the local brokers as mediated by the "makelaars". Thus, if the king had wished to obtain more gunpowder than actual guns then he was at least partly successful. Perhaps he was engaged in an ongoing armed conflict at that particular time, although if so he does not give mention of it, or alternatively he could have been preparing himself in the expectation that armed conflict might soon erupt. As this accord had been arranged in the previous year, and as Krause had encountered a similar preference for gunpowder fifteen years earlier, then it would seem that this was a longstanding predilection on the part of the Malagasy, a predilection at least partly attributable to the factors I have outlined above.

It is equally clear, then, that ceremony demanded this treaty to be officially ratified within the space of a royal audience. The lack of overt irritation or frustration on the part of Truter to this aspect of the proceedings suggests the likelihood that he, and other officials of the VOC, also perceived the official sealing of an agreement between two such representatives as normative, and that he thus took the ceremony as

seriously as did the king. As envoy and diplomat of the Company in its relations with a sovereign monarch, he knew not to jeopardize future trading prospects by treating the occasion flippantly. On hearing the monarch's next utterance, however, his ease was to turn to immediate and outspoken exasperation. This accord would be acceptable for this year's trade, said the king, but in future years it would no longer be acceptable. In future, payments were to shift from goods to currency: for one slave, as per previous specifications, a payment of 40 pieces Spanish Reals, or in the alternative 100 pounds bussekruijt and 1 piece snapphaan would be expected. This certainly was a significant mark-up, and it was greeted by Truter not with polite acceptance or even a noncommittal hesitance, but rather with something approaching rage. The intensity of his denunciation is remarkable, and is unique in the self-representation of a man who otherwise appears to be almost entirely placid. These prices, responded Truter, are so exceptionally high that there is no means by which they can be agreed to; and, moreover, when others (ie. other European traders as well as future expeditions of the VOC itself) encountered such high and rapidly increasing prices they would refuse to trade, avoiding this place and choosing instead to search out more reasonable prospects elsewhere.

These were certainly bold words to have been said to a king, and the monarch is likely to have been taken aback; not only had he been publicly reprimanded, but the courtly sycophantic atmosphere of the audience, with its carefully coiffured phrases and styled turns of conversation, would have been instantly shattered. The king must have felt that this price increase was entirely reasonable, and that courtly etiquette enabled him to introduce this (to him) acceptable extension of their relationship at this point, such that it too could be endorsed within the language of the royal audience. This bit of plain speaking would have revealed the gulf in perception between the Dutch officials and the Malagasy royalty, which until now had remained veiled: that for all their apparent respect and tolerance for the ways of this land, the Dutch saw the Malagasy as greedy and grasping, as luring the merchant to a royal audience under a dishonest pretext to spring such an iniquitous contract on him where, separated from his people, he was at his most vulnerable; and the Malagasy, perhaps, that the Dutch were stingy and unsympathetic to their social and economic realities, and were unwilling to be flexible in the terms that they demanded of their trading partnerships on the island.

It is unclear whether Truter's response was a spontaneous eruption of anger or whether it was more carefully considered and thus delivered with a sufficient degree of decorum. The king's apparent lack of rancor is suggestive of two possibilities, both of which may have simultaneously been true. The first is of Truter's evident status as envoy, as a man speaking under the authority and protection of the Company. As such, he would have possessed a degree of freedom that, for example, would not have been available to the king's common subjects or even, one would suspect, his officials and nobles. Although occupying a subordinate position within the space of the audience, and although it was the king who, as royal host, largely determined the proceedings of the audience, this event reveals that the king did not consider Truter or his men to be his sovereign subjects. In fact, when one examines both Truter's bluntness and the king's measured response against the backdrop of the dealings, arrangements and conversations that had led up to this moment, then the king's treatment of Truter throughout his sojourn would appear to be remarkably consistent. What might at first appear to be ambivalence on the king's part, in the way he sometimes seems to regard Truter as a subject and sometimes as a partner, slowly begins to make more sense; he regarded him neither as one nor the other but rather, in a manner of speaking, as both. Truter's position as an envoy, by which he was subordinate to a monarchical power (ie. the Company) with whom the king had established trade relations, as well as representative of this power to the degree that it was he who negotiated with local royalty on this power's behalf, had enabled him to occupy a privileged space that was under the protection of this sovereign power; and it was by virtue of this standing that the merchant was entitled to speak with a substantial degree of frankness, while paradoxically occupying a ceremonial standing that was symbolically subordinate to that of the king. It is only in seeing Truter as an envoy, perceived and accepted by the monarch as such, that one can reconcile what might otherwise appear to be two contradictory impulses in the king's overall conduct towards him.

Secondly, and this too would be in keeping with what appears to be Truter's maintained professional discharge of his duties, I believe it probable that although Truter's words evidently conveyed a deep and heartfelt frustration, and were delivered with a definite spontaneity, he expressed his displeasure in a more carefully

considered fashion than the word “spontaneity” would readily imply. Whatever his particular status in the king’s eyes, the monarch is unlikely to have responded with complete equanimity had Truter not exercised some restraint, for he would have considered such blatant disrespect to be an affront to his dignity and royal bearing. One need only contrast this king’s response here to that of the monarch who Krause encountered on his expedition in 1760¹⁵⁴. Krause, a more voluble and unrestrained man than Truter, responded with a similar outrage to the demands and ploys of the king with whom he came in contact; but due, one suspects, to the ill-considered and disrespectful delivery of his protests, the king responded with a reciprocal vehemence to the point that he issued a veiled threat against the Dutch. As this was obviously a different king, one could perhaps attribute his more violent reaction to a divergence in personality between the two monarchs; but the far more evident differences in character and temperament between Krause and Truter provide compelling evidence that at least part of the reason for the different receptions each received can be ascribed to their respective conduct.

It is also possible that Truter concealed the actual response of the king to his protestations; but if so he would have been engaging in a substantial deceit. It is certainly not impossible, however, that Truter would have engaged in such a narrative deceit, and it once again brings into question the extent to which one can trust the descriptions in the journals, particularly in relation to a situation such as this that would have been fraught with potential peril. The merchant may well have disguised the king’s response here, in order to downplay the severity of his own transgression. If so, then the narrative succeeds in portraying Truter as an ethical agent who insists on a trading practice that is not only morally fair but commercially beneficial to the intent of the Company; and, by portraying a reasonable response on the part of the king, it is possible that he intends for his intervention to be perceived as successful, and thereby for the officials to consider him a capable merchant able to navigate treacherous foreign conditions. It remains impossible to ascertain the exact extent to which Truter’s narrative here is faithful to his experience, or, conversely, the degree of invention and fabricated self-representation that it incorporates. Probably it is a mixture of both, a mixture that one could arguably (although not definitively) attribute

¹⁵⁴ This incident will be discussed later in the chapter.

as much to the inadvertent mechanisms of memory as to considered calculation¹⁵⁵. To the extent that it may be partially invented, it provides an intriguing contrast with that which is provided by Krause, which I will examine later in this chapter.

However, it is still likely that Truter exercised a degree of restraint that Krause had lacked, and thus not only saved face but maintained the diplomatic demeanor necessary for the Company to keep its trading prospects viable. His exercising such restraint, when coupled with his status as envoy which carried with it certain liberties and the space to speak plainly, enabled Truter to express a genuine grievance in the name of his sovereign while yet deferring to the institutions of Malagasy courtly culture. The established patterns of courtly speech and programmed conduct may have been shattered for a moment, but not the integrity of the audience itself; and while the king was no doubt surprised and perhaps even rankled at Truter's swift denunciation, he did not allow open anger to replace courtesy and the protocols of respect.

In fact, it is not entirely clear the degree to which Truter's words even registered with the king. Truter had agreed that for the sake of the current trade he would confirm their present relationship, and it appears that the king was satisfied with this proposal. The king's next words suggest that he believed their trading partnership would be extended into future years; they also provide a further fascinating glimpse into the nature of west Malagasy courtly and communal movement. In the expectation that Dutch vessels would be returning to this stretch of coast, the king explained that in future the Dutch must anchor their ships not at Morondave, as they had on this occasion, but at the Manenboela River, to which he was preparing to move in the company of all his subjects. The cause of this imminent migration appears almost incomprehensible to modern Western eyes; it would seem, inferring from Truter's brief description, that the king had arranged with a neighbouring monarch some kind of territory swap. This monarch was King Remiada, and apparently he was the uncle of the king (whether this would indicate an uncle as we would understand today, or

¹⁵⁵ If Truter did compose his journal entries on a daily basis, as would have been expected of him, one cannot attribute any major credence to the argument that his narrative of this day's events was significantly affected by the functioning of memory; one can only advance the possibility. It certainly seems more likely that, if he has created a narrative that differs substantially from his actual experience, that it was the result of a conscious and deliberate attempt to shape his story in such a way as to maintain a homogenised and appealing self-characterisation.

whether he was a more distant relative, is difficult to say); moreover, he had been the king of Manenboela, the region to which the king would soon be headed. The king went on to say that he had given the land of Morondave away to his uncle as a present, and would therefore be leaving for Manenboela, where he would re-settle his community. The modern historian is compelled to speculate to a substantial degree in order to make sense of all this. The fact that the kings of Morondave and Manenboela were related in some way is some evidence of the larger kinship networks that linked the seemingly disparate kingdoms along the west Madagascan coast. From the minimal information that is included in the journal, it is not easy to grasp exactly who was superior to who, or whether they viewed each other as equals; it is not even clear what the king means by the word “present”, or even if this was an erroneous attempt by Truter to translate the king’s meaning into terms that would have been comprehensible to his contemporaries.

Larson refers to a transfer of sovereignty in the Madagascan highlands in 1785 that may shed some light on this matter. Two rival kings, Andrianjafy and Andrianampoinimerina, were competing for the allegiance of local *firenena* communities so as to gain sovereignty over the region. One of these communities, the Ravoandriana, exerted their autonomy by shifting their allegiance from the former king to the latter, a move that Larson claims (as was alluded to in my discussion of the various mechanisms of royal authority) was fairly common. Their new king, however, was unable to provide the Ravoandriana with the protection they expected from him; and for his part, Andrianjafy elected to relinquish his rights over this community to another neighbouring sovereign, Andrianamboatsimarofy, who was based at the present-day capital of Madagascar, Antananarivo. It was the mutual decision of these two kings to enslave a portion of the Ravoandriana and sell them to the export trade that was to be the cause of a significant conflict over the legitimacy of certain innovative methods of enslavement, a conflict that Larson goes on to explore in much detail¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵⁶ I explored these innovations in enslavement in Chapter 1; this conflict is one example of the social disruptions that ensued from the introduction of what many locals considered illegitimate slaving practices that violated the codes of the moral community.

This episode obviously differs quite significantly from that which Truter is describing; for one, the kings described here by Larson were sovereigns over more extensive polities than would appear to be the case with the king of Morondave, polities that Larson has described as kingdoms. However, a number of commonalities might assist in clarifying the king's intention. There is, of course, the fluidity in Malagasy social constitution and cohesion, explored in great depth by Larson with regard to the highlands but nevertheless evident here; just as social communities were not necessarily tied to supporting one particular king, they were not necessarily relegated to one specific geographical area, but could move around with a substantial degree of freedom. Thus, just as the Ravoandriana could substitute their allegiance from one king to another, it is conceivable that a west Madagascan community, especially in an region of decentralized polities, could substitute one geographical area for another. Larson's description also reveals that the social intercourse between different monarchs was not always predicated on hostility, but could also be characterized by cooperation. Thus, it is equally conceivable for the king of Morondave to enter into an agreement with his uncle Remiada, an agreement whose ramifications would alter the particularities defining their respective communities at this particular juncture; this, too, would be an enactment of political autonomy. Thus, while it is difficult to unravel with exactitude the reasoning behind what appears to be such an unusual decision, one can nevertheless appreciate that such a relocation was feasible within the social parameters that regulated the moral community, and would not necessarily have been met with incredulity by those familiar with local custom and governing practices.

It was to be during this excursion that Truter would make his first acquaintance with the wives of a Malagasy monarch. This encounter, of a different order to those with which he would have become well accustomed by now, was precipitated by another audience, one that took place later that same day. On concluding his discussions with the king, in what appears to be a perfect return to amicability, Truter paid his final compliments to the king and was escorted out of his presence by the Rijksbestierder, Metariho. This is the first time on this journey that Truter makes mention of the Rijksbestierder, but it can safely be assumed that he had been present throughout the audience and that he probably acted as translator; perhaps he had even softened Truter's objection somewhat, making it more palatable for the king's digestion. At

this point, Truter gave Metiharo his presents; he thus chose a private moment to do so, a rather different tack from that adopted with King Joema's Rijksbestierder, Rijgigo. Obviously Malagasy courtly rituals would have by no means been static, and the merchant would not execute the same performance on every occasion that he met with a local monarch; perhaps he had deemed it inappropriate on this occasion, for whatever reason, to present the Rijksbestierder with his gifts during the audience, or perhaps the particular ritual of this audience had not allowed him space to do so. Metiharo gave him thanks and promised that he would be of whatever service he could to him. Truter was provided with some refreshment and allowed to rest, until the afternoon when he was once again summoned into the king's presence. The purpose of this audience would prove to be very different from that which had preceded it, and the respectful solemnity of the trade negotiations was to be replaced by a more open and cordial friendliness. Instead of engaging in the usual mercantile discourse, the Dutch were to be acquainted, for the first recorded occasion on this voyage, with female company.¹⁵⁷ The king's encampment must have been fairly close to the trees under which the audiences were held, for the tent in which his wives were residing was only a short way off. The actual social intercourse that the Europeans had with these women was short, restrained and conducted with the utmost propriety. Before they entered the tent the king informed them for exactly what purpose this interaction was being allowed; and it would have become immediately apparent that his intent was one with which they were by now well familiar, and perhaps had even expected. The Dutch were being presented with an opportunity to present their gifts to the king's wives; and on entering the tent this is exactly what they did. The wives are described as being seated on a carpet within the tent (Truter, who as I have explained is seldom tempted to indulge in rich description, neglects to provide us with even the exact number of these women); the merchant and his officers placed the relevant presents before each of them, for which they received thanks. They did not, as far as the journal can be trusted in this respect, spend any more time with the women, but instead withdrew and returned to the king, who had been awaiting them at his customary station.

¹⁵⁷ Boucher records a similar incident when King Rammanrasse of Toulrier introduced the merchants of *De Brak* to the women of his family. See Boucher, 'The Voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742' *Historia*, 24, 1, p. 53.

Perhaps the only definite observation that one can make from this encounter is the fact that this king had evidently traveled in the company of a far larger portion of his dependents than had King Joema. In the entry of 27 June, it had been reported to Truter that the king had “mobilized his people” for his journey; and one is now forced to question whether this was a figure of speech or whether it had been intended to be taken literally¹⁵⁸. There is no evidence that King Joema had been accompanied by his wives; rather, the facts would support the contrary notion, for it would have been for lack of their presence that Truter had presented those gifts intended for his wives to Joema himself. What is even more surprising when comparing the two is that Joema had resided only a day’s journey from the ship’s anchorage at Toulter, while this king’s residence was a good deal further inland than that; if one of them had decided to undertake the journey in the company of his wives (and, by implication, of a much larger retinue as well), then one would expect it to have been the former rather than the latter. I would suggest that this could possibly indicate the relative value attributed by different monarchs to their trade with the Dutch. This second king probably placed a much greater personal emphasis on the trade, hence the effort he had expended in organizing this audience; and the fact that he had traveled in such large company and was accompanied by none other than his own wives would suggest that he was seeking to impress upon the merchants his power and status, as well as the high regard in which he held the VOC and his prospects of conducting further trade with them. His allowing the merchants to personally present gifts to his wives without, it would appear, his direct supervision, would have acted as a symbol of the trust and esteem in which he held the VOC trading body as a whole. Even his going into detail about his giving territory to his uncle as a present could have been intended to convey a vision of his superior power and prestige within the region. (The meagre attention that Truter devotes to this possible attempt to demonstrate his magnanimity could give some indication of the measure of the merchant’s response.) This interpretation is of course dependent on there being a fair degree of accuracy to Truter’s account; were one privy to the king’s version of events, then one might be able to develop a divergent portrait of both his character and his responses to this particular encounter. However, the overwhelming impression one gets from the manner in which this audience was conducted, and which minor details such as this serve to reinforce, is one of the

¹⁵⁸ CA C 2255, ff. 11-12.

gravity and consequence with which this monarch treated his opportunity (perhaps his first?) to meet personally with these traders from across the sea; and it makes his apparent composure in the face of Truter's explicit dissatisfaction all the more remarkable, while paradoxically enabling us to more completely appreciate the reasoning behind his tolerance.

This is not to say that King Joema did not treat the VOC with an equivalent esteem; but it is possible that as Toulhier was invariably the first port of call for any VOC vessel approaching Madagascar from the south-west that he was more confident and expectant of frequent trade. Perhaps his trade links were more established, and he therefore felt more secure in his negotiations and less susceptible to the temptation to impress, while this king, although having received Dutch traders in at least one previous year, may have yet been attempting to establish more definitive trade links with European polities. If so, then his effort to procure an increased price in subsequent years may have caused him some disillusionment, although the gist one gets from Truter's meager descriptions is that his confidence survived intact.

Apart from Truter's outburst, the audience had gone remarkably well. Of perhaps the greatest relief to the Dutch was that the king had registered little offence to the grievance they had voiced, and that a trade founded on a reasonable accord would continue to be permitted, at least for that year. The day's negotiations had been concluded on an amicable footing, the merchant had made the acquaintance of the king's close female relatives, a sure sign of the monarch's continued favour, and all rituals of the courtly negotiating protocol had been respected without any devastating mishap. The European party spent one more night in the valley and was entertained lavishly by the king, who slaughtered two sheep for their evening meal. The following morning, 8 July, Truter met the king for the last time¹⁵⁹. Not wishing merely to bid the king farewell, he had also intended to seek a further contract, this time for the purchasing of oxen and rice. If Truter had ever been under the impression that the west Madagascan coast supported prosperous kingdoms with healthy surpluses, then he was being steadily disabused of his error. A reasonable price was agreed on for oxen but, as had been the case with King Joema, the king informed Truter that he was

¹⁵⁹ CA C 2255, ff. 20-22.

not in the position to supply him with any quantities of rice. The refusal of both kings to provide rice is evidence that the Malagasy were by no means experiencing a surplus in their agricultural production, for if they had been in the position to sell off some of their yield they undoubtedly would have done so. Cattle, however, were evidently in good supply throughout the coastal region, and the Dutch could at least have been assured of a steady supply of fresh meat.

The king, evidently keen for some further social intercourse, asked Truter if he was not willing to spend another night, but the merchant declined the offer. He claimed that he was expected back at the ship, and that a decree of the *Gesaghebber* compelled him to return in as short an amount of time as he was capable. From what we know of the nature of the relationship between captains and merchants on VOC vessels, it is highly unlikely that a captain would have possessed the necessary authority to issue such a directive to a merchant, even if he had wished to do so; and moreover, Truter, from what we have seen of his conduct thus far, does not seem to be the kind of man easily dominated by another officer, no matter what his rank. More likely is the possibility that Truter was simply keen to get back to the ship to re-assume his duties in overseeing the trade, and that he needed to present to the king a convenient excuse that would enable him to make his departure as rapidly as possible. Had he not been resolute in his decision to leave, it is probable that he would have found it difficult to extricate himself from spending even more time in the king's company. The king evidently wished to persuade Truter to enjoy his hospitality for a further period, and he would likely have considered it an insult if Truter had declined the offer without providing some compelling and convincing reason¹⁶⁰. Aware that he may well have come close to causing an infraction the previous day, Truter would have wished to honour his obligations to the Company while maintaining a respectful relationship with the king; and if those Company officials who were to read the journal initially found his reasoning here strange, they would no doubt, on further inspection, have considered it to be entirely reasonable. The king responded in kind, and graciously allowed the merchant to leave; and after a much shorter journey comprising two days

¹⁶⁰ The reference I made earlier to the Europeans being compelled to accommodate themselves to a different conception of time in Madagascar is probably applicable here. The king may well have not appreciated the urgency with which Truter wished to return to the vessel; if so, one can more readily entertain the possibility that Truter invented a diplomatic excuse to refuse an extension of the king's hospitality.

(the currents, this time, would have been aiding rather than hindering their progress) they arrived back at *De Zon* on 10 July¹⁶¹.

The problematic, at times even adversarial, relationships that developed between VOC trading crews and their Malagasy patrons could not always be as easily defused as had proved the case in Truter's journey to Morondave. There were certainly occasions when the tensions simmering between the two parties could degenerate into outright animosity; however, such degeneration can be traced as much, if not more, to the temperaments of the individuals involved in the relationship as to any supposed intrinsic cultural chasm. As much as there were definite cultural distinctives between the two communities in their respective perceptions and expectations of the practice of trade and negotiation, and as much as these differences played their role in creating the difficulties that often ensued, one cannot downplay the effect that personal idiosyncrasies and prejudices played in exacerbating, and sometimes even in engendering, such apparently irreconcilable differences. It is in this regard that the voyage of *De Neptunus* provides such a wealth of rich and dramatic detail. The characters of Krause and the king with whom he was to have the most contact emerge as the dominating trope in the written record of this expedition, serving as a narrative conduit that personifies the misunderstanding and animosity that made this vessel's voyage such an unsuccessful commercial venture. In this sense, Krause and Truter can be seen as the two counterpoints upon which this entire episode revolves; for it is in the juxtaposition of their respective handlings of crises and unforeseen circumstances that one perceives the divergent ways in which European traders would interact with local Malagasy culture and then represent it in their writings. Thus this particular journal provides one with an alternative perspective, one that undertakes to pursue how the realities of encounter could play themselves out in such markedly different ways from those that have already been sketched within these pages.

Before I move on to those aspects of Krause's voyage that I will be exploring, let me mention something about the different narrative styles of the two merchants, and of how their journals have been constructed. In detailing Truter's encounter with the king of Morondave, I raised the possibility that he had created at least a partially

¹⁶¹ The journey back to the ship is narrated in the entries for 8-10 July, CA C 2255, ff. 20-24.

invented self-representation, in which he confronts the perceived difficulties and injustices of the local culture in a capable and restrained manner. A similar possibility must be predicated for Krause; however, the character of his self-representation would assume a very dissimilar form. Where Truter appears self-possessed, Krause represents himself as completely the opposite, as one who is so overcome by the adverse conditions of Madagascar that he is unable to exert the will of the Company. While this may appear an odd route to take, it does serve an equally didactic purpose. Moreover, it is an opposition that one may attribute, at least partially, to the respective material outcomes of these voyages, this outcome being the number of slaves that each merchant was able to acquire. As Krause's voyage was so much less successful than Truter's, and as he was being made constantly aware of his failure throughout the voyage, it is possible that where Truter saw fit to maintain an air of composure in his account, Krause chose to emphasize, perhaps even exaggerate, an atmosphere of adversity that he constantly implies is beyond the means of a merchant such as himself, with limited capacity and powers, to surmount. However, while one may partially ascribe these divergences in narrative style and emphasis to the divergent material conditions and experiences encountered by the two merchants, it is important to also incorporate psychological realities within this analysis. Krause's narrative is as much the consequence of his own personality and idiosyncrasies of character as it is of the particular challenges he endured; and one can observe in these idiosyncrasies the possible rationale for his lack of capability, a lack that would ultimately hold fatal consequences for him on the *Meermin* six years later.

On 27 November, Krause and *De Neptunus* had left their first port of call, the Maningare River, and sailed on in the direction of Manembag¹⁶². After sailing for more than a week, on 6 December they met with several Malagasies who, having paddled out in their canoes, gave them directions to Rionaare, a settlement in the vicinity of Manembag¹⁶³. The Malagasies also indulged in the customary practice of promising Krause that their king, Ziemantie, had slaves and rice "in great abundance". Based on his experience at the Maningare River, Krause may well have been slightly sceptical of this extravagant promise; but he probably believed that he could obtain at least some slaves and food provisions at this stop, hopefully enough to have made the

¹⁶² CA C 2251, f. 3.

¹⁶³ CA C 2251, ff. 3-4.

journey worth its while. He could not have known at this point that the most devastating mishap of the entire voyage was about to happen in a few days time.

A messenger was despatched as per custom, and the men of *De Neptunus* spent more than ten days in listless and possibly frustrated idleness, although it is equally possible that much of the crew appreciated the opportunity to rest. However, it was to prove to be a longer and exasperating wait than Krause had at first expected. Only on 16 December did the merchant receive final word that he must travel to pay his respects to the king and negotiate a trade¹⁶⁴. Krause writes quite distinctly that “as nothing was being done”, he would undertake the journey immediately; clearly, while there is a muted sense of his frustration and irritation within these comments, this was yet coupled with the hope that a worthwhile trade would still be conducted on these shores.

I will not go into detail on the journey that Krause undertook. The passage took four days and required the traversing of difficult terrain, which must have done little to appease his growing impatience. It must have been in an anticipatory mood that he went to bed the night of his arrival in Ziemantie’s capital, after writing of his “eagerly awaiting” the morning, when discussions about the trade would finally commence.

The king’s capital was Anpandre, an inland settlement that appears to be much like the others described on both voyages. Having arrived on the 21st, the visitors were allowed to rest until the following morning (Krause’s seeming impatience for the morning suggests that he would have been more than willing to begin right away, notwithstanding the rigours of their journey)¹⁶⁵. The initial audience had been scheduled for the next day; and so on the morning of the 22nd, after depositing their baggage in a hut, they were ceremoniously conducted into the presence of the king (the Rijksbestierder, who they would come to know as Reviharo, announcing their entrance by blowing on some kind of horn)¹⁶⁶. As with the other audiences, the king was seated beneath a tamarind tree, on a stool; however, Krause adds a distinctive observation here, absent from Truter’s descriptions, that this round Madagascan stool

¹⁶⁴ CA C 2251, f. 6.

¹⁶⁵ CA C 2251, f. 7.

¹⁶⁶ CA C 2255, ff. 7-10.

had been placed in a position such that it was higher than any of the king's ministers. This comment reveals as much about the narrator as it does about the social conventions of the society he is observing. Krause, on the whole, is a more vividly descriptive writer than is Truter, which at times can make one suspect that perhaps he was in the wrong profession. One is thus presented with details, physical and social, that are less present in Truter's account; and so, for instance, here we see that there was a symbolic seating arrangement that represented the hierarchical structure of the coastal Malagasy/Sakalava court. Truter customarily omits such details, leaving one to presume that the nobles always stood around the king; due to his absence of such descriptive detail, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which Krause's image can be generalised across time and space. This descriptive aspect of Krause's writing spills over into his self-representation, which on more than one occasion does his character some harm. Whatever harsh criticism one may ultimately hold towards Krause, it should be noted that this descriptive element of his writing can be linked to those personal idiosyncrasies which ultimately brought him to ruin; and that his frequently voluble and expressive remarks manifest themselves as much in the social and physical detail they elicit as in the convoluted and often ill-considered attempts at cross-cultural trade upon which it proves so easy to impose judgement.

As Krause so expressly noted the position of the nobles relative to the king, it must have made something of an impression on him. What was to make even more of an impression was the dialogue that was to follow this imposing introduction. Krause knew the drill, and presented the king with the customary greeting on behalf of the Company; he added that he wished to encourage a further trading partnership between the two parties, perhaps suggesting that the VOC had not yet initiated formal ties with this particular king. The king, as by now one would expect, was more than sympathetic to the merchant's request. He did not respond immediately, however, but considered all that Krause had related before replying through his Rijksbestierder, Reviharo. If it was the case that the Dutch had not yet established a trading relationship with Ziemantie, then he must at least have been familiar with their operations, or perhaps had been approached by other European traders. for he claimed that he had been waiting a long time for traders such as them to come to his kingdom. After reiterating the claims of the Malagasy commoners who the Dutch had met immediately on their arrival, that they were in possession of an abundance of slaves

and rice, the king suggested that they draw up an accord. He was, then, most probably familiar with the kinds of trade agreements that local kings were accustomed to draw up with foreign traders, although it also suggests the possibility that these agreements were modelled on local variants common in trading partnerships within this region of Madagascar. Of course, Krause would have been in full agreement with everything that had been said until this point, although he probably viewed the monarch's extravagant claims to their quantities of slaves and rice with a certain degree of suspicion.

It soon became clear, however, that drawing up this accord would be delayed until the afternoon. The king dissolved the audience and, after giving the European party a cow and a quantity of rice as gifts, withdrew. This giving of provisions to the Dutch, which was experienced by Truter at Morondave fifteen years later, is one example of the hospitality that the Malagasy monarchs would bestow on foreign traders when visited by them. Wherever they were hosted by a local monarch in this way, the foreign traders could always be assured that their physical needs would be met for the duration of their stay. What is slightly unusual about this episode is Ziemantie's delaying of the accord until late in the day, rather than acting as most of his contemporaries did and proceeding with negotiations immediately after the formal introductions had been concluded. Perhaps he wished merely to rest; but whatever the reason, the king retired for the duration of the day, only to once again summons Krause to another audience later that evening.

In the interim they had given presents to Reviharo, the Rijksbestierder. This was a man with whom Krause and his contemporaries would grow very familiar over the course of the next few days; sadly, however, it was a relationship that during this ceremonial observance had reached its highest and most generous peak, and that from this moment would steadily deteriorate.

The traders were escorted in the evening to the king's dwelling, or "dalm"; this, too, is somewhat unusual, indicating perhaps that the king wished to conduct negotiations in a more intimate, private setting than the public sphere of the outdoor royal audience would permit. No courtiers or nobles other than the Rijksbestierder are mentioned as being present, and, given the location, one can thus presume that the king was

attended to by a far more minimal entourage than that which had accompanied him earlier in the day. This intimate setting, however, was not to create the cordial, sycophantic atmosphere for which Ziemantie had perhaps intended it. Rather, it is possible that here, situated away from the majority of the king's subjects, cultural misapprehensions and the clash of temperaments gave cause to a far more explosive confrontation than would ever have occurred had negotiations taken place in a more formal setting.

The disagreements began almost immediately, and centred on which goods would be considered suitable for that year's trade. Bearing in mind that Ziemantie may not yet have actively traded with the Dutch, it is possible that he demanded too much so as to set himself on as high a pedestal as possible; although, once again, this is offset by his evident knowledge of the trade stuffs of Europeans. The following argument, as revealing as it is of how cultural expectations could coalesce to shape a disastrous and almost violent encounter, is equally illuminating of how the Malagasy viewed European goods and which goods they desired most fervently. It rapidly became clear that as far as Ziemantie was concerned, "coraaalen" (beads), "lijwaarts" and other such functionally useless accessories would not be acceptable. Rather, said Ziemantie, who from the moment the Europeans entered had entirely dominated the conversation, they would only be satisfied with guns, gunpowder and the accessories of armament. The accord that he proposed was also rather excessive: for one slave, he demanded 2 pieces snapphanen, 3 calabashes or 24 pounds bussekruijt, 300 pieces or 15 pounds musket kogels and 150 pieces snaphaan steenen; or, in the alternative, one large vat of kruijt, with 2000 pieces kogels and 2000 pieces snaphaan steenen.

This absolute demand of the king's would have brought dismay on Krause. *De Neptunus* had come to Madagascar laden with a wide assortment of goods, including considerable amounts of these now apparently useless items. According to the conditions demanded by this king, in order to obtain even a moderate number of slaves they would be forced to part with a vast proportion of their arms storage; perhaps they had not brought enough weaponry for even a moderate trade under such stipulations, although Krause does not say as much. Clearly, they had not been expecting such stringent conditions, or that the attention of Malagasy monarchs would be so concentrated in one single direction. The traders had come prepared for a

multifaceted trade, in which a broader variety of goods than just weapons would be acceptable for purchase. In Ziemantie's defence, it can also be argued that he, and probably a number of others like him, had attained a higher degree of sophistication in their trade with the Europeans than had their predecessors in earlier decades, and that they were less content to settle for those trinkets that the Europeans were more than happy to pass off in return for the far more valuable resources of human labour.

However, this incident might well point to a broader, more generalised rupture in European-Malagasy trading relations. The fact that *De Neptunus* contained a good portion of what were now evidently undesirable goods, it testimony to the belief of Company officials that they would be able to trade them. Either the traders were out of touch with the demands of Malagasy kings, or circumstances on the west coast of the island had altered considerably since the last VOC-initiated voyage to Madagascar. It seems likely that cultural and political shifts in the interim period had served to create a new environment of exchange, one that privileged weapons and ammunition over those personal adornments that had been acceptable in earlier periods. The growing appreciation of Malagasy monarchs for European firepower requires a deeper analysis, particularly in the light of what occurred subsequent to this interview. Suffice to say for the moment, that a different social and political climate pertained to that which the Dutch seem to have been accustomed. This climate was a product of two distinct historical trajectories, the one internal and involving political disputes and perhaps a growing armed warfare between kingdoms, and the second external, the result of the Malagasy growing familiar with, and hence more desirous of, European armaments. Such a swiftly altering climate was producing a direct and explicit stimulus on this trading atmosphere that had been long established, and was rerouting it along different rules and imperatives for which the foreign traders were not adequately prepared.

Undoubtedly somewhat taken aback by this unexpected demand, Krause chose to attempt to alter the conditions of the trade. This part of the dialogue is given minimal attention by Krause, although it was ultimately to have devastating repercussions for the prospects of future trade; and one is therefore tempted to conclude that he has muted the way in which he conducted himself at this strategic moment. He certainly spends a lot more space complaining about the greed and voraciousness of the

Malagasy than in describing his own possible culpability in this ultimately failed venture; which of course, given the purpose of the journals, is entirely to be expected. Thus, to a large extent, he appears in his narrative to be reasonable and restrained, and the Malagasy to be filled with fury and irrational anger. However, the sheer volubility and indignation with which he delivers himself of some of his denunciations leads one to suspect that Krause was far from temperate when in the midst of these heated exchanges.

Krause claims that he expressed reticence towards this trading proposal, as it would exclude the Dutch from including a wider variety of trade goods in their transactions. Instead, for an adult slave he offered 2 pieces snaphaan, 1 calabash kruijt, 80 pieces kogels and 40 pieces snaphaan steenen, and for a child he suggested a vat of kruijt, not higher than 40 pounds and the same number of kogels and snaphaan steenen. However reasonable this argument may have appeared to the Dutch, it failed to elicit any sympathy from Ziemantie. Perhaps, as I have suggested, Krause had not delivered his reservations with the appropriate degree of decorum. The counter-proposal that Krause offered in return was probably considered an insult by the king, who throughout this episode appears as touchy as the merchant. Most probably it was a combination of the content and delivery of Krause's response that provoked the king's resentment, for one suspects that a polite expression of reservation would not have provoked the vicious response that Krause goes on to describe. Whatever the circumstances were, however, Ziemantie was clearly not prepared to modify his proposed accord. His all-or-nothing approach seems to have been what confounded Krause most of all.

The merchant addressed both his reservations and an alternative proposal to the king after receiving his demands. His reservations consisted of a reticence on his part towards the king's conditions, as it would exclude him from trading in other goods apart from armaments; while the proposal was for a price, a compromise in effect, according to which the Dutch would be prepared to part for a certain limited amount of weapons, powder and shells. According to Krause, Ziemantie's response to both of these two overtures was far from favourable. In fact, whatever it was that Krause had actually said to the monarch was evidently considered so impudent that the audience was halted immediately. Krause appears to have been mystified, as he left the king's

dwelling and made his way to the accommodation that had been set aside for him and his companions, as to why the king had considered himself so abused by the merchant's words. All that he describes of the actual incident is that, after venturing his offer, the Malagasies fell into a great stir, upon which they rose in a manner expressive of a considerable degree of resentment, halted the proceedings and made it clear to the Europeans that their welcome in the king's abode was at this moment terminated. One can safely presume that it was the king who had taken such disfavour towards Krause's proposal, and had then acted in what the merchant seems to consider a wholly intemperate and indeed entirely unexpected manner. Some offence must have been given, although Krause does not specify what he believed it to be; and while it is certainly possible that he simply did not have any idea, and was thus caught in one of those spaces of cultural misunderstanding that are not infrequent in the narratives of European exploration and cross-cultural contact, it is equally possible that, as I have suggested earlier, he is muting his own role in instigating this disturbance. If so, it was probably his hope that this emphasis on the anger and unreasonableness of the Malagasy would be accepted at face value by the Company officials, who would then be less inclined to pose questions as to his own conduct and possible culpability.

The ultimately more devastating expressions of anger and recrimination, however, were to be delayed until the following day. Krause had retired the previous night to his dwelling, where he would have composed his journal entry for 22 December; and at the conclusion to that day's entry, after describing the anger of his host, he briefly depicts his sense of discomfort and apprehension about that day's events, and particularly towards what the next day would hold for him. Such apprehensions were to prove to be well founded. On the morning of 23 December another audience was held; on this, now the third such occasion, they returned to the outdoor location that was the most customary setting for such audiences according to that established practice that had been departed from the previous evening¹⁶⁷. After the aborted attempt at a private interview, the king may well have wanted to impress upon the merchant and his compatriots once again the weight of his royal authority, as well as to resolve upon an accord that would be stamped by royal decree in full view of the

¹⁶⁷ CA C 2251, ff. 10-14.

king's officials and subjects. Perhaps it was hoped that where private mediation had failed, public and authoritative process would prevail.

The king opened the day's proceedings by informing Krause that he would be willing to lessen some of his demands, if in return the merchant would offer a more generous proposal than the one he had presented the previous day. Furthermore, he asked Krause if the Europeans would be interested in purchasing other items besides slaves and rice (what the items might have been is not given any mention within the text). Krause's response was no more temperate and restrained than his remarks had been the previous day, and one can say with a lot more confidence that this time he really was goaded by definite anger and indignation. He replied that the Dutch were not interested in anything besides slaves and rice, and that the king's demands were still too high to be agreed to. His next words were to give cause to an even greater and perhaps irreparable damage; for, either in a fit of anger, or else in a calculated move that he hoped would swing the initiative back in his favour, he went on to issue what amounted to a threat against Ziemantie. Accept our terms, he told the king; if not, then the Dutch would be compelled to move their attentions elsewhere, to other established kingdoms such as Toulrier and Morondave. Perhaps believing that the king, so enthusiastic had he appeared towards their arrival, would be suitably chastened by the prospect of losing out on their promise of trade, Krause was attempting to bargain with Ziemantie as something approaching a political equal.

If this had in fact been a cogently planned movement on Krause's part, then he had grossly miscalculated. The king rose in anger (the only occasion in any of the journal entries I have examined where a Malagasy monarch acted with such an overt display of emotion before his subjects) and spoke with what must have been some fury; savagely castigating Krause for, as he puts it, trying to force his hand in his own kingdom", he curtly informed him that he could leave whenever he pleased but that he could not expect any trade with him or any of his subjects. With that, the meeting was disbanded as abruptly, and in as extreme an atmosphere of accusation and recrimination, as had occurred the previous evening when Ziemantie and Krause had found themselves goaded by similar sentiments. Both attempts on the king's part to obtain a mutually-acceptable agreement that would nevertheless favour his interests had met with dismal results; and as much as one suspects Krause of in some way

provoking Ziemantie's ire, one must also entertain the possibility that this was Ziemantie's first attempt to trade with a European power, and that his perhaps too enthusiastic desire to make maximum gain from this encounter had helped engender negotiating tactics that could only have led to disaster.

Never reticent to express his personal feelings in the pages of his journal, Krause describes himself as having walked away from this disastrous audience in great distress. Effectively, his contact with the king had been cut off; the monarch's fury appeared to him to be such that he would not be prepared to reach any sort of compromise. As Ziemantie would have had the opportunity to amass wealth and armaments by reaching an agreement with the Europeans, it seems that there were more than material considerations at stake here. It would appear, at least partly, to be a classic sense of hurt pride and perceived indignity that had afflicted Ziemantie; these are conditions that are not only particular to Malagasy royalty of the 18th century, but that are emblematic of fractures in royal, hierarchical societies that can be perceived in a variety of different historical and geographical contexts. Nowhere in these pages is there a more powerful example of how financial considerations could be repudiated by a king in favour of concerns that were to him of graver and more intense consequence.

The only person who Krause could now approach to assist him in defusing the confrontation was Reviharo, the Rijksbestierder. Until this moment, their interaction had remained within the bounds of official, customary practice; but now, Krause was to make a request of him in a far more delicate capacity. The Rijksbestierder would have been present throughout all the audiences thus far, and would therefore have been witness to both the grievances voiced on both sides and to the verbal conflict that had brought negotiations to such an abrupt end. Now, Krause saw Reviharo as the only conduit through which he could hope to patch things up between himself and Ziemantie, to restore a dignity to both their officials that over the course of these two days had been lost, and, of course, ultimately to reach some kind of compromise whereby the aborted trade could be permitted to proceed.

So it was that Reviharo was forced to submit himself to a long tirade by Krause, who swiftly relinquished any remnant of the restraint that he had maintained when in the

presence of the king. Certainly Krause claims to have been in great distress at this point, and his conduct here, which approaches that of desperation, would appear to bear this out. He asked the Rijksbestierder if he would be prepared to reason with the king on his behalf; he then went on to list a litany of the perceived injustices that the king had subjected him to, claiming that Ziemantie was so eager for gain that he had been attempting to force his hand with threats, and that this, in his view, was a totally unreasonable course of behaviour to be expected of a prince. Then, in what may well have been an impulsive burst of exasperation, he demanded that they be conducted back to the beach, where their ship was anchored. These comments appear somewhat contradictory, despite the fact that they would have been composed some hours after the conversation in question when the narrator would have been in a more reflective mood; but it is possible that Krause, having worked himself up to a pinnacle of indignation at the conclusion of his tirade, suddenly decided that he had had enough and that it would be best simply to depart this community with haste.

Reviharo's diplomatic skills would have undergone a period of testing during this tense standoff; but it seems that he succeeded at least in partly defusing the merchant's sense of affliction. He persuaded Krause to wait until he had spoken once more with the king, in order to convey the merchant's grievances to him and to attempt some kind of mediation between the antagonistic parties. As this was partly what Krause wanted, and as by this stage he had probably calmed to the point where Reviharo's words began to make increasing sense and the prospects of reconciliation more and more convincing, it is likely that he became convinced that a brief period of waiting would perhaps ultimately stand in his favour.

At this moment, a messenger from outside the settlement presented himself before Reviharo, bringing news that by virtue of the distress that it would have brought to the king and his officials, would act as the catalyst necessary to bring both parties immediately back to the table. The previous night, in an armed attack on a settlement described as one hour's walk from the king's residence, 50 people had been killed and 100 cattle driven away. Why this news should have taken so long to reach the royal residence is difficult to say; perhaps the surviving residents of the settlement had been so intent on pursuing their attackers that no communication had been entertained until the following day. This devastating fracas was to give the prospect of renewed trade

negotiations an entirely fresh impetus, and to swing the initiative partly back in Krause's favour. For now Ziemantie would have been more intent than before to acquire European weapons so as to swiftly pursue battle against his attackers; and to do that as rapidly as possible, he would be forced to compromise.

Though Reviharo's intervention was now not necessary in the manner that Krause had originally intended it, it was once again through the Rijksbestierder that Krause and Ziemantie sought to thrash out a mutually acceptable agreement. As it turned out, however, sentiments between the two antagonists would not emerge much improved, although this time, no doubt much to Krause's intense relief, they were able to reach an agreement for weapons and ammunition that the merchant deemed acceptable¹⁶⁸. It was when Krause deigned to ask if the king would be prepared to trade cattle and rice for "coraalen" and "linen" that the brief peace was shattered, and the now familiar visage of anger and recrimination returned. With intense anger, the king rejected Krause's request out of hand, claiming that under no circumstances would he consider altering the usual agreement governing the trade in foodstuffs and provisions. Confiding in his journal that at this moment he felt himself to be in some danger, Krause hastily withdrew his request and proceeded to thank the king for his willingness to contract a trade. At this, says Krause, the king's expression changed once more back to that of friendship, and he made the peculiar gesture of offering the Europeans the services of Reviharo, who would travel back with them to their ship to personally oversee the trade¹⁶⁹. An extraordinary set of circumstances seems to have accompanied the person of this extraordinary king, who in many respects chose to do things differently from other west Madagascan monarchs, and who, out of his confrontations with an equally unusual and volatile merchant, created an idiosyncratic trading relationship organised along equally singular principles.

¹⁶⁸ It is not very clear from Krause's written records exactly what this agreement was. However, based on a transaction on 28 December in which 2 adult female slaves were purchased for 4 pieces snaphaanen, 24 pounds bussekruijt, 10 pounds musket kogels and 100 pieces snaphaan steenen, it seems that their compromise lay somewhere between their two original, opposing demands.

¹⁶⁹ While one can certainly question whether all of Krause's descriptions cohere to the historical truth, it seems that Ziemantie was indeed a volatile man, not entirely dissimilar in temperament to Krause himself. and that in a single meeting he could display an entire range of human emotions. Either this, or Krause has painted a character so interesting that one must praise his literary capabilities.

I say this is unusual, for in none of the other entries, for *De Neptunus* or *De Zon*, does a king assign his Rijksbestierder the task of overseeing trade on the beach. As the breadth of this study is limited, this of course does not mean that such a gesture never occurred on other occasions. However, from my detailed reading of both journals, the evidence would suggest that the Rijksbestierder would act primarily as an interpreter and communicator between the king and the merchants, who would facilitate negotiations but invariably remain within the ambit of the monarch's court and residence. On those occasions when the king travelled, the Rijksbestierder would travel with him; but this is primarily because his office is associated so directly, even intimately, with the direct royal presence of the king. On no other occasion that I have read does the Rijksbestierder travel unaccompanied by the monarch to conduct business directly, and without royal supervision, with European traders. What in effect was happening here, was that the Rijksbestierder was assuming the role and responsibilities, for this limited period, of those other officials, more closely associated with the beach and with the practicalities of trade, that are labelled in the journals as "makelaars".

However, despite the roles that are most obviously associated with the Rijksbestierder, they cannot be limited by simplistic and imposed boundaries, but must rather be explored through depicting the diversity of their performances¹⁷⁰. It is particularly in an example such as this, that this analytical frame is accorded its most complete potential. As a figure of high rank in the court, and, moreover, occupying a position exceedingly close to the king's person, I believe it safe to say that the Rijksbestierder was in every way superior in status and authority to such official as the "makelaars". The events following Krause's and Reviharo's departures from *De Neptunus* would most certainly bear this observation out.

The king had stated quite specifically that Reviharo would be traveling with so them so that he could oversee the Factory; thus, he would fulfil the role that in other kingdoms, for the most part, was performed by the "makelaars". This, too, suggests that this king was either new to the trade with Europeans, or otherwise still largely unfamiliar with established trading practices; or, that this could be another example of

¹⁷⁰ In outlining the characteristic duties of the Rijksbestierder in Chapter 1, I also emphasised that his role could on occasion extend beyond the domain of the court.

Ziemantie's rather idiosyncratic approach to royal affairs. In the event of the former possibility, Ziemantie may well have wished a promising but yet fledgling trade, and particularly one that had been birthed under such inauspicious circumstances, to be overseen by a very senior official in whom he had complete trust. If Ziemantie indeed was unfamiliar with established practices as they existed elsewhere on the coast, or even if he just wanted to ensure the trade got off to a good footing and that all his stipulations were rigorously adhered to, then it is perhaps less surprising that he picked an official close to his person to oversee the initiation of this trade.

If this is so, then his trust appears to have been betrayed almost immediately. Later, after the audience had been concluded and Krause and Reviharo were conversing in private, Reviharo told the merchant that he would acquiesce to one of the merchant's requests that Ziemantie had rejected, and would be willing to trade cattle and rice for "coraalen" and "linnen". This is a surprising move on the part of the Rijksbestierder, and it begs a number of questions, especially considering the fact that while he may have seemed sympathetic to the merchant's predicament at this time, he would later prove far less willing to negotiate. However, at this moment Krause's anger and distress must have been very evident to him, particularly because the merchant had unburdened himself to the Rijksbestierder on at least one occasion before this; and it is probable that purely in the interest of saving his monarch's trade from any further potential disasters, he decided to renege on one of the king's stipulation's without the monarch's approval. One can only speculate as to what his punishment might have been, if any, had the king found out; unless, and this is also a possibility (particularly given the difficulties in measuring elapses in time from the journal entries), that the king had conferred privately with Reviharo after the audience, and there instructed him to make this compromise. Whatever his reasoning or justification, Reviharo evidently considered it expedient at this point to alter one of the conditions of the trade, illustrating the senior position that he did occupy in the royal hierarchy and the space that he had, whether approved officially by Ziemantie or not, to re-negotiate with the Europeans on limited terms.

If Reviharo had gone behind the king's back in offering this compromise, then a substantial amount of further deviousness was to follow; and in this, the Dutch themselves were far from innocent. It seems that both sides, their trading relationship

fractured at its birth by the vitriolic rancour of the verbal exchanges that had given it shape, were now unable to interact with each other with reason and openness, but were somehow compelled to attempt to trick each other into granting concessions at every turn. When the merchant, accompanied by the Rijksbestierder, returned to the ship on 27 December, he indicated that he wished to speak to the Captain in private¹⁷¹. In order to rid himself of the two Malagasy captains, Ivaro and Marasohe, who were keeping him company on the ship, Captain Harmse feigned to be sick; he then listened to Krause's tale, which must have been well peppered with the perceived indignities that are described in the journal entries, for he responded with a similar outrage. Once the two captains had been sent ashore, Reviharo was admitted to Harmse and Krause's presence. The captain and the merchant must have decided to isolate the Rijksbestierder from any of his countrymen, such that they could attempt to domineer him into submission. On this occasion, it was the Captain who did most of the talking, while Krause no doubt looked on in vindicated approval. Harmse expressed his displeasure towards Reviharo about the manner in which the merchant had been treated by himself and the king, and stated unequivocally that the Dutch would simply not be willing to trade weapons and powder for rice and cattle. He then proceeded to issue an ultimatum to the Rijksbestierder; that Reviharo, after considering these matters, either bring him a favourable response the following morning, or that *De Neptunus* would immediately depart.

The Captain seems to have been attempting to force a concession that Reviharo had already indicated he was willing to make. Either Harmse had not grasped this aspect of Krause's tale (perhaps Krause even neglected to tell it), or he merely wished to ensure that the concession would definitely be adhered to. More than this, however, this incident reveals a fascinating slant on the negotiation of roles between captain and merchant, and of how certain extreme circumstances could blur the official distinctions between the two. As this was directly a trading matter, and as Krause, as merchant, was officially the most senior officer on the expedition, then one would expect the merchant to have been the one to voice grievances and issue ultimatums. However, in this instance it was now the Captain who was playing the dominant role in negotiating this relationship, and he does so in a way that, by contrast, reveals

¹⁷¹ CA C 2251, ff. 15-16

Krause's ineptitude and incapacities in an even starker light. As will be recounted later, the Captain was ultimately to be no more successful than Krause in ensuring a profitable trade; however, his apparent decisiveness and firmness here makes it obvious why Krause was so quick to approach him to gain succor and assistance. Having to rely on another officer, and one who despite his rank was still nominally his junior, does not reflect well on Krause's capacity to fulfil the duties expected of him. In this case, and of course it is one among many within the annals of VOC history, there occurred a negotiation of function and role between officers of distinct classes, due largely to the relative strengths and weaknesses of the characters involved. When situations of stress and difficulty arose, and when the officer primarily responsible for negotiating that difficulty proved unable to do so; then another officer would be forced by virtue of the circumstances to take over his responsibilities for a time, even if there had been no explicit agreement for him to do so. Although this is perhaps something of an extreme example to demonstrate this principle, similar negotiations of duty would have occurred on a large number of VOC voyages, when particular social, political and cultural realities made it difficult, if not impossible, for officers and crew to operate within the predetermined boundaries of their commissioned roles.

As far as fulfilling the dual-role of their mandate for the Company is concerned, this example reflects rather unfavourably on Krause and rather favourably on Harmse, who in this moment would have inhabited both aspects of the dual-role simultaneously. Of course, by isolating Reviharo from his countrymen and subjecting him to what amounts to a threat when alone and faced by these two VOC officers, Harmse had been able to create a set of circumstances that were more conducive to forcing the VOC's cause than those that Krause had been compelled to confront while he was at the settlement of the king. However, it was largely Harmse's initiative, and this very ability of his to manipulate local conditions such that they would be more favourable to advancing their cause, that had allowed this intervention to occur at all; and it is questionable whether Krause would have been able to effect such a move on his own, or if he had proved unwilling to tacitly relinquish a portion of his responsibility to the Captain. Reviharo's isolation, and his probable lack of familiarity with conducting a trading venture of this nature, would have played effectively into Harmse's hands; and the Rijksbestierder had little choice but to agree to consider the

Captain's ultimatum, and thus to withdraw back to the company of his compatriots who were awaiting him on the beach.

The next morning, things began to look a bit brighter for the Europeans. This was now the morning of 28 December, and as per their arrangement with the Rijksbestierder the previous evening, Reviharo arrived to give his reply to the Hollanders' ultimatum¹⁷². His reply was favourable; he agreed to trade according to the skipper's demands, and a pact cohering to these conditions was ratified. Reviharo clearly believed that the skipper was serious about his threat to withdraw if he was not forthcoming on their demands and willing to cooperate; and at this stage, it looked as though a mutually acceptable agreement had finally been reached, and that the Europeans' attempts to trade here might meet with a certain success after all. Of perhaps the greatest significance here was the absence from this mediation of the two agents who one would have expected to be its primary instigators; namely, King Ziemantie and the merchant Krause. The king and the merchant, who represented the Malagasies and the VOC respectively in this trading relationship, had effectively, although not necessarily officially, relinquished their negotiating responsibilities to their juniors in social rank, who, for this time at least, had proved level-headed and restrained enough to work out an effective compromise.

It was a compromise that, given the atmosphere of misunderstanding and antagonism that despite this settlement continued to enshroud the protagonists of this drama, was perhaps inevitably to flounder. However, this was still a few days into the future. On the 28th two slaves were purchased, and a few more over the next three days; and on retrospect, it may seem that some whim of fate had decided that this uneasy truce would survive until the exact end of 1760.

During this time the construction of the Factory had been taking place, which had led, on 30 December, to a minor disagreement¹⁷³. Krause had been of the opinion that it should be built near to the river, where fresh water would be readily available; it is probable that at other stops and on other voyages, wherever possible, the Dutch would arrange to erect their structures close to flowing streams (and, for the most part, they

¹⁷² CA C 2251, ff. 16-17.

¹⁷³ CA C 2251, ff. 17-18.

did drop anchor near rivers), although there is little direct reference in the journals to support this. Reviharo, however, who seems to have assumed direct authority over building the Factory, replied that the banks of the river were frequently overrun by spring tides, and that the structure thus needed to be situated at a distance from the water. He assured Krause that all their supplies would be provided by the Malagasies; and this assurance seems to have satisfied Krause, for the issue is not mentioned again. Reviharo was clearly perceived by the Dutch to be directly responsible for activities on the shore, as part of his sphere of authority; and his preeminence among other Malagasy officials in the eyes of the Dutch, discernible in their decision to conduct an isolated audience with him on the ship, is here made further evident.

The more substantial disagreements began, not surprisingly, over the transactions for slaves, and they were to reach a head on 1 January. On 31 December, the Dutch had purchased one male and two female slaves; in return, Reviharo wanted three vats of gunpowder¹⁷⁴. Krause and the VOC officers were increasingly under the impression that the Malagasies were attempting to swing the traffic in the direction of gunpowder, which they seemed to prefer to muskets (which strongly suggests that whatever firearms this community possessed were being kept in good use); furthermore, they believed that yielding to this preference would have a contrary effect on their trade, as their supply would not sustain the commerce for the extended period necessary to gain a suitable amount of slaves. Their attempts to persuade the Malagasies to trade in other items were, however, ultimately to prove disastrous.

The first of these unfortunate encounters occurred the following morning, on 1 January¹⁷⁵. On arriving on the shore (the Factory could not have been completed yet, for otherwise the merchant would no doubt have installed himself in its living quarters), Krause met Reviharo, who was accompanied by two Malagasy captains, Remingandre and Andiaponoho. The three slaves that had been considered the previous day were in the charge of these Malagasy officials, together with another five who had been sent by the king. These five slaves consisted of one old female slave, two young male slaves and two young female slaves. Not only did these slaves largely fail to meet the standards that the Dutch desired (of the total of seven slaves,

¹⁷⁴ CA C 2251, ff. 18-19.

¹⁷⁵ CA C 2251, ff. 19-20.

only three were male; and, particularly in the light of the difficulties the merchant had experienced thus far in obtaining suitable slaves, no exception would have been made here to the VOC's preference for strong, adult males), but the Rijksbestierder was demanding excessive payments in return for their purchase. They demanded a large vat of powder for the last four, and for the first, the old woman, they wanted 2000 pieces "kogels" and 2000 pieces "snaphaan steenen". An intense argument ensued, in which Krause was to live up to all the expectations that readers of this narrative will now hold for him. He claims that he and his contemporaries suspected there to be "wickedness" on the part of the Malagasies; that the locals had no slaves of any real worth to sell them and, by implication, that they were simply attempting to manipulate them into gaining as much armaments and powder as they could, in return for as little as possible. Krause offered one vat of 60 pounds powder, or 10 cans of the same, in exchange, which he claimed was in line with the accord; but the Malagasies were insistent, and so Krause made up a larger vat. Clearly, in his eyes, the Malagasies were now not only being deceitful and manipulative, but were blatantly disregarding the contract that they had originally agreed to; and, again fired by righteous indignation, he lost his temper once more.

This time, no words harsh or tender, no blatant threats or alluring promises, could undo the damage. Once again, the reader of Krause's journal is subjected to a long and virulent tirade against the injustices of the inhabitants of this island. By now, the list of grievances sounds distinctly familiar. The Malagasies were cheats, they did not honour their promises and they did not respect their accords, despite the fact that the Dutch had kept theirs; and this time, Krause ranted on, there would be no further attempts at a settlement, for the Dutch would be sailing away on the morning of the following day. Despite the characteristic verbosity and excess of sentiment, Krause acted more decisively here than on any other occasion during this entire unfortunate escapade. The Malagasies may well have been shocked at the suddenness and vehemence of Krause's censure, and it goes without saying that they were certainly not happy recipients to his message. The only conciliatory gesture that Krause was willing to make was to transport the three slaves that had been purchased the previous day back to the beach; he had demanded that the Malagasies come to fetch them in their canoes, but they had steadfastly refused, claiming that this responsibility lay with

the Dutch. Clearly wishing to avoid further trouble, and possibly fearful of an armed attack if he did not comply, Krause agreed to do so.

The following morning, 2 July, the ship put to sail; however, they were soon approached by Reviharo and the Captains, who promptly claimed to have experienced a sudden change of heart¹⁷⁶. They would no trade according to the agreement, they said; and if Krause and Harmse suspected further trickery, then perhaps this was offset by the apparent response of the Malagasies when they say how serious the Dutch were about trading according to their own (in their opinion, fair) conditions. They agreed to return to the shore on two conditions; that the Malagasies trade according to the original agreement, and that no slaves would be purchased, but only a provision (100 “tampatjes”) of rice. Apparently satisfied that the Malagasies were now serious in their avowals to honour these conditions, Krause went back to the beach, in the company of the officials, once more. However, once on shore, Krause claims, the Malagasies once again attempted to sell him slaves for powder, and refused to allow him to purchase rice for “coraalen” and lijwaaten”, claiming that they had no use for these goods and that they could obtain them with ease from the local Moors. Krause launched into a final tirade against Reviharo and his confederates, accusing them of attempting to cheat him and informing them that this time they would be leaving with no chance of return; and they parted ways in an atmosphere of unappeased recrimination and reproach. *De Neptunus* finally sailed away on 3 January, but due to unfavourable winds and currents the ship was unable to put into Toulhier. Probably unwilling to risk any further disasters, the officers elected to sail back to the Cape; and on 11 February 1761, a chastened and dispirited crew sailed their vessel back into Table Bay¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁶ CA C 2251, ff. 20-23.

¹⁷⁷ The voyage back, from 3 January to 11 February, is narrated in CA C 2251, ff. 23-25.

III

The *Meermin* and *De Zon*:

Understanding the Impulses that have Shaped Shipboard Slave Uprisings

The tone that this narrative has assumed thus far might incline one to believe that the slaves purchased were an entirely quiet and subservient lot, fatalistically accepting of their fate and docile in the face of the constant brutality they were forced to endure. This is primarily a result of the cultural sensibility that informed the journalized narratives from which this interpretation is shaped. Both Krause and Truter, for all their glaringly obvious character differences, held this in common: they were, above all else, merchants, and their records are thus centred primarily on their mercantile obligations. All their opinions, their foibles, successes and personal idiosyncrasies are ultimately revealed in their relation to the VOC's commercial enterprise. Neither man was intent on adventure or excitement, but merely on trade; and it is this commercial fixation, so dear to the hearts of Company directors and officials, that recurs with the greatest frequency in the writings of these two men, as much out of professional obligation as out of personal inclination.

Within this context, it should not be surprising that slaves appear mute, their voices shrouded within an abundance of negotiations, lists, transactions and purchases. Slaves were considered, if one is to rely for convenience on a crude descriptive term, as goods; although in a sense one could extend this observation to common members of the crew who, while undoubtedly occupying a rung in the social hierarchy of the Company that was superior to that of the slaves, also remain largely invisible in much of these accounts. However, the slaves' presence is restricted even further, confined by their status as material cargo; virtually the only opportunities for the historian to perceive slave mentality are provided by those rare incidents when slaves engaged in violent resistance against their subjection. Not considered worthy of even the scantiest attention in their own right, apart from the commercial indicators of price, age and occasionally physical description, only the most heinous infraction on their part could rouse the ship's officers to a more pronounced awareness towards their human cargo. On those few occasions when this did happen, the narrative tone undergoes a rapid shift, from cultivated disinterest to moral outrage.

Such an outrage occurred on *De Zon* on 29 August 1775¹⁷⁸. While slave uprisings were by no means a regular occurrence, this not the first time that slaves violently attacked the crew of a vessel on which they were being held. Although rare, violent slave rebellions had occurred on a number of occasions on VOC vessels, including those trading for slaves in Madagascar. For example, James Ravell refers to a mutiny¹⁷⁹ on the *Drie Heuvelen* in 1753, which occurred while the ship was headed back for the Cape after having traded in Madagascar for 110 slaves; the revolt was instigated by two of the slaves, of which one was killed during the uprising¹⁸⁰. In another recorded incident, a number of male slaves on *De Brak* in 1742 managed to free themselves and jumped overboard; six were recovered from the water, while seven either escaped, or more likely drowned while attempting to reach shore¹⁸¹. Maurice Boucher, who records the incident in his narrative of the voyage, claims that two ringleaders were severely punished, although he does not explain exactly how¹⁸². The most notable of these, however, was that on the *Meermin* in 1766, on which Commies Krause had reprised his role as senior merchant. During their return voyage to the Cape, a large body of slaves seized control of the ship, murdered a good number of the crew (including Krause) and threatened the remainder with death if they did not turn the ship around immediately and sail back to the Madagascan coast from whence they had come. Only a remarkable series of events determined by a fortuitous (for the Dutch) blend of deviousness and luck prevented this ambitious intent from being realized¹⁸³. I will be referring quite extensively to the initial stages of the *Meermin*'s slave revolt within this discussion, and so will not dwell at this stage on its fascinating details; suffice to say that this and other less extravagant but equally

¹⁷⁸ The records relating to this slave uprising are to be found in the entries for 29 August and 30 August, and in a Resolution drawn up from a meeting of the *scheeps-raad* on 30 August and inserted at the end of the journal. The references are as follows: 29 August, CA C 2255, ff. 43-48; 30 August, CA C 2255, ff. 48-50; Resolution, CA C 2255, 84-87. I have relied predominantly on the Resolution for the purposes of this chapter.

¹⁷⁹ In this chapter, I use the word "mutiny" in a general sense, as a violent uprising that occurs on a ship. There are, of course, significant differences between such maritime uprisings as they are staged by sailors and by slaves respectively; while I have attempted to make some of these differences clearer in the course of this chapter, I still use the term to encompass both forms of shipboard revolt.

¹⁸⁰ Ravell, "The VOC Slave Trade Between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1759", p. 15. The *Drie Heuvelen* and the *Meermin* are the only examples of slave revolts that Ravell mentions. However, he subsequently provides a brief reference to *De Zon*, but with no mention of the slave revolt in question; and so there may be other examples of slave mutinies on this route of which we are currently unaware.

¹⁸¹ Boucher, 'The Voyage of a Cape Slaver in 1742', *Historia*, 24, 1, p. 54.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ For a complete narrative and historical interpretation of this mutiny, see Alexander, 'The Mutiny on the *Meermin*', BA Honours Thesis, Historical Studies Department, UCT, 2004.

heartfelt violent uprisings were a definite feature of VOC slaving experience, and so this was not a prospect with which Company seafarers would have been entirely unacquainted. So when the slaves of *De Zon* rose that day, they were by no means the first to so violently give voice to their grievances; they were following in the stead of what one might almost call a tradition of maritime slave rebellion, and the features that defined and shaped it bear much in common with the similar efforts of other Malagasy enslaved who had preceded them.

It is of course entirely unlikely that the slaves who rose on *De Zon* knew anything at all about these earlier efforts of Malagasy slaves to effect their freedom, and this makes the commonalities in experience all the more fascinating and worthy of reflection. It is of particular worth to compare what happened on *De Zon* in August 1775 with the actions of the slaves on the *Meermin* in February and March of 1766, for although the circumstances that birthed these respective rebellions are in many ways entirely dissimilar, the articulated intentions of the mutineers bear so much in common as to be almost identical. This is not to suggest that Malagasy slave mutineers were capable only of static responses to their enforced condition of servitude. Rather, these two incidents illustrate the discrepancies as much as the commonalities embedded within such experiences, thus demonstrating the full extent to which personal agency and social organization determined both the intent of the rebellion and the manner and level of brutality with which it was enacted. However, there exists a transcendent impulse behind what might initially appear to be spontaneous and localized eruptions of rage; and it was the carefully planned and predetermined channeling of this impulse that enabled the mutineers to take their revolts as devastatingly far as they did.

On 29 August 1775 *De Zon* was anchored at Sambouwa, having arrived there on 23 August. It was the fourth stop on its expedition along the west coast. After leaving Morondave on 5 August the vessel had skirted the Manenboela River after finding no convenient place to drop anchor. The intention of the merchants was to make swift progress for the trade at Sambouwa and from there to investigate prospects at the Maningare River, and so they wasted no time in searching for a more convenient anchorage. Drifting up the coast towards Sambouwa, they had seen signs of habitation on the shore and, on meeting with the locals, discovered that they were in Mangariék,

a community with which, according to Truter, the Dutch had not yet established any contact. They had arrived on 9 August and had spent a number of days trading; the results, however, were disappointing, and it is likely that Truter had come to regret this largely profitless interlude. On their initial arrival at Mangariek they had been approached by canoes with inhabitants of Sambouwa, who had promised them a fruitful trade and urged them to make for their territory as soon as they were able. Thus, when *De Zon* did finally put into Sambouwa on 23 August, the merchants were probably entertaining high hopes that they would meet with a greater level of success, one that could compensate for the poor returns they had endured for much of the past month¹⁸⁴. At this stage, *De Zon* had a total of 62 slaves on board, comprising 45 males, 16 females and one who is simply described as being a young child. Of these 62 slaves, four males and 6 females had been purchased at Toulir, 28 males and two females at Morondave and 13 males, eight females and the child at Mangariek.

By 29 August their prospects were looking even less promising than they had been at Mangariek¹⁸⁵. On the 23rd the merchants had met the Rijksbestierder Saszape, who had promised to inform King Malalilo of their arrival and to obtain permission to begin the trade. He had assured them that they would hear from the king within 6 days, which must have come as a blow to Truter; he could now expect an even longer wait than the one he had been forced to endure at Moronadave. Between the 23rd and the 28th no messenger returned, and the crew's foul humour would have been aggravated even further by a spell of bad weather on the 26th, which forced them to lift their anchor for a short period. The mounting frustration of Truter and his associates came to a head on the morning of the 29th, when the messenger did finally return. He had brought no slaves with him, however, and his promises of trade must have appeared noncommittal, for Truter went on to explain to Saszape, in no uncertain terms, that if they had not been brought any slaves by the following day then they would follow established practice and withdraw to another location. Saszape, who had been rowed out to the ship to receive this information, went back to shore and the officers and crew were left to spend the remainder of the day in idle frustration.

¹⁸⁴ The period from 5 August to 23 August 1775 is narrated in C 2255, ff. 32-42.

¹⁸⁵ The period from 23 August to 29 August 1775 is narrated in C 2255, ff. 42-43.

When one reflects on the events that were to follow, it becomes possible to see how the sentiment that so easily fosters violence had been brewing over a lengthy period of time. The crew of *De Zon* had been on the coast of Madagascar for close to three months now, and while they had met with a certain success at their first two stops their efforts even there had not been free of trial. Once they had left Morondave, their fortunes had taken a decided turn for the worse. Having met with such dismal prospects at Mangariék, the ship had sailed on to Sambouwa after having received a personal invitation from a number of its inhabitants, who had taken the startling initiative, unique in the records of these two voyages, to travel into the territory of a neighbouring monarchy in order to promise a more worthwhile trade within theirs. By then, Truter and Paddenburg must have been, if not quite close to despair, then at least severely discomfited in the face of their collective adversities. When it became clear that they were wasting their efforts at Mangariék, the words of Sambouwa's emissaries would have returned to these weary merchants as *De Zon* drifted along the coast; perhaps they instilled a sense of hope and promise that now, at last, they could finally settle down to a rewarding trade free of the hassles and the constant demands of terrain and cultural translation that had marred their experience over the previous month. Of course, they should have prepared themselves for the probability that difficulties would once again come their way; but after an exhausting time of wrangling, threatening and cajoling, with little material gain to show for the energy that this had expended, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Truter, Paddenburg, Andriessen and indeed all the officers and crew had reached the stage where they would have been prone to embrace any promise of a turn in fortune without the usual caution. If this is correct, then the personal emissaries of Sambouwa would have effected just such a promise.

After six days of incessant waiting, a mounting and greatly intensified frustration would have begun to coalesce with an equally dangerous complacency. While the tone of Truter's journal entries over this period remains characteristically restrained, he is unable to completely camouflage his disappointment and indignation; and his threat to leave within one day if the trade had not begun is evidence of the severe, perhaps even personal manner in which he took this umbrage. It is possible that he considered the local conduct here to have overstepped all bounds of propriety and honesty; it is equally probable that he was experiencing internal doubts as to his own

capabilities and that he was becoming fearful that his future with the Company would be jeopardized by the record of his performance. He may have even been growing fearful of disgruntlement on the part of the officers and crew, who would have been no less frustrated with the constant delays and the empty promises than he was, and who were perhaps inclining towards placing the blame on his shoulders.

Moreover, and perhaps of even greater significance, the officers and crew had for six consecutive days been doing nothing but waiting idly, their duties reduced to a minimal maintenance of the vessel while it lay at anchor. In the light of what followed, one can begin to more fully appreciate the complex reasoning behind Truter's ever-imperative desire, both here and at Morondave, to begin building the Factory and trading as quickly as possible. Not only would he have wanted to make the most profit for his time, but he would have wished to keep his crew busy and in constant activity, be it assisting local Malagasy with the construction of the Factory or providing assistance in facilitating the trade. Maritime lore is replete with the misadventures of common sailors who, when in foreign and often attractive localities, had little to occupy their time. Truter had already lost three sailors to desertion, and a number of weeks later he was to lose one more¹⁸⁶. The ignorance of the Dutch of the difficult and alien terrain as well as what Truter ascribed to be the open collusion of the local monarchies in abetting these deserters made the prospect of desertion a constant worry for the officers; and in a situation such as this, where for day after day the sailors were compelled to do little but wait, the attendant dangers were greatly intensified. Moreover, even those sailors not so prone to desert could find plenty of opportunity to get up to all kinds of other mischief. There would thus have been the additional worry that the sailors might, whether wittingly or unwittingly, cause grave offence to the locals in some way.

It is therefore clear that there would have been a myriad of fears and trepidations running through Truter's head as he patiently awaited the messenger's return. Concern as to whether they would in fact meet with any success here or whether, as became increasingly likely, it would prove to be their most abortive attempt yet, would have been coupled with a growing trepidation as to the growing restlessness of

¹⁸⁶ These desertions are discussed in Chapter 1.

the crew, whose corporate discipline after six long, sultry days would have been in grievous danger of collapsing. Perhaps, and this is pure supposition, Truter was even beginning to doubt the continued loyalty of his officers and crew, and that he was progressively more nervous about the prospect of a mutiny. When all this is taken into account, it is certainly not surprising that after receiving the messenger's return Truter's apprehension turned to decisive action, and he began to make plans to remove the vessel from what was becoming an increasingly perilous atmosphere.

If Truter ever had been suspecting mutiny on the part of the crew, then he was looking at the wrong quarter. He would have been less susceptible to suspect any danger arising from the slaves; despite the fact that slave uprisings had occurred, he would probably have considered the vessel to be safe from a recurrence of a tragedy such as that of the *Meermin*. On that ship, the slave mutiny had been enabled by the gross negligence of the officers; the man who must bear the brunt of the blame was none other than, it should not be surprising to learn, the merchant, Krause¹⁸⁷. On board the *Meermin*, overall discipline and shipboard authority had become so lax that a large party of slaves had been allowed on deck with the stated intention that they would assist the crew in their duties. The ultimate consequence, however, was that this company of understandably disgruntled captives was given free and open access to almost the entirety of the upper decks. Such a gesture was unheard of, and certainly against all regulations; but the actual event that finally precipitated the mutiny must in the final analysis be attributed to Krause. Evidently his voyage of 1760, while certainly not ingratiating his character with the senior Cape officials, had not extinguished his future service for the VOC, for in 1766 he had reprised his position as merchant on a slaving expedition to Madagascar¹⁸⁸. It was a decision that they would certainly come to regret, although by the time news reached the Cape of the disastrous mutiny the man most deserving of the Company's ire had long since deceased. Thus, in one of the strange ironies of this saga, the officer most responsible for creating the conditions that enabled this victorious slave mutiny remained free of punishment (although this was, of course, of cold comfort to the man concerned),

¹⁸⁷ The summary below is drawn from Alexander, 'The Mutiny on the *Meermin*', BA Honours Thesis, Historical Studies Department, UCT, 2004, pp. 9-16.

¹⁸⁸ This might seem to be an immensely generous gesture on the part of the Company. However, it is unlikely that there were many other merchants with his experience of Madagascar, and so his selection may have been a matter of necessity. The Company could very well have ascribed his failure in 1760 to the unpredictable trading environment of Madagascar, with which they were, of course, well familiar.

while the captain and one of the mates were to receive the full brunt of the Company's indignation.

The ill-considered indiscretion with which Krause had conducted himself on his 1760 voyage was what ultimately played into the hands of the slaves, granting them an opportunity that they would never have thought possible. Interestingly, he had managed to purchase approximately 140 slaves on this voyage, a vast improvement on his previous attempt; but it would seem that he was incapable of seeing any voyage to its conclusion without committing at least one major blunder. With no more Malagasy kings to insult or aggravate, and with the ship rapidly approaching the Cape, one would have thought that the *Meermin* and her crew would have been out of any significant danger. Krause's blunder here, then, was of a vastly different order to those of which we have been witness until now; it stemmed not only from his unthinking impetuosity (although only a man who had long catered to the reckless impulses of his character could have enacted such a notion), but equally from an evident lack of imagination¹⁸⁹. In the light of what inevitably followed, it can only be assumed that Krause had no appreciation whatsoever for the condition of the slaves, and for what they might try and do if even the most desperate of opportunities to gain their freedom was presented to them.

The opportunity that Krause was to present to the *Meermin* slaves was far from desperate. He had decided that a number of the Malagasy weapons they had acquired on the island needed cleaning and maintenance, and considered it to be a not outrageous prospect that the slaves, who had been above decks for some time now, be the ones to perform this necessary chore. The slaves cleaned the weapons without any recorded protest; perhaps they, too, did not view the prospect as outrageous. It was only after they had finished their errand that the magnitude of Krause's bungle became evident, with absolutely devastating consequences. On being ordered to return the weapons, the slaves, in a move that seems to have been as astonishing to the ship's crew as it appears so reasonable to us, declined to comply. Instead, they now did begin to conduct themselves in a quite outrageous fashion, by steadily proceeding to

¹⁸⁹Alexander, 'The Mutiny on the *Meermin*', BA Honours Thesis, Historical Studies Department, UCT, 2004, p. 13.

massacre the crew. Krause had, quite literally, placed the very objects necessary to effect their freedom into the slaves' hands.

It was in the ensuing battle that Krause was murdered, stabbed to death by a Malagasy assegai. His foolhardiness and lack of consideration had finally cost him not only the control of his ship but ultimately his very life. It goes without saying that had he somehow survived this mutiny his service for the Company would have been permanently terminated, and he would likely have found himself exiled for life from the Colony.

A number of the crew, including the Captain, one of his mates and a few other senior officers, did in fact survive; they had managed to secrete themselves in the *Constapelskamer*, in which they secured themselves from the rage of the Malagasy slaves who promptly murdered all those Europeans unfortunate enough to have been left on the decks. It was these men, and in particular a level-headed officer, the *Adsisent* Olof Leij, who through an entirely improbable synthesis of cunning and simple good fortune were to eventually turn events in their favour¹⁹⁰. I will be returning to the *Meermin* at a later stage, but for the moment let us return our attention to *De Zon*.

De Zon did not have a Krause on board; on the contrary, her officers, as far as one can accurately decipher from the records, were on the whole completely professional and capable in the performance of their duties. Under Truter's authority, there would certainly have been no casual handing over of weapons to the slaves; in fact, the slaves would never have even been allowed on to the upper decks. Moreover, *De Zon* was still anchored on the coast of Madagascar; thus, despite the tensions and the complacency that had been brewing over the previous six days, the officers and crew were still mentally situated within their commercial engagements on the island.

Whatever laxity may have been taking root, subsequent events indicate that it had not yet encompassed the majority body of officers and crew, as seems to have been the case with the *Meermin*; and if my supposition is correct that it was Truter's concern

¹⁹⁰ Because the ensuing events on the *Meermin* do not directly pertain to the comparison and discussion that is to follow in this chapter, and as it would require a lengthy and detailed narrative that would be very similar to the one that I have already completed, I have refrained from recounting the entire narrative here.

about any complacency that was effecting his decision to leave Sambouwa, then it would appear that the merchant, at least, was still in complete control of his faculties and was maintaining as strict a vigilance over his crew as was possible under the circumstances.

Thus, if the slaves on *De Zon* were to mutiny, they would be immediately hampered by a handicap that those on the *Meermin*, through Krause's recklessness, had been able to circumvent. To take control of the vessel, they would have to fight their way up from the lower decks where they were enchained; this, of course, only if they able to break free from their chains in the first place. In the face of an armed crew, this would be an almost impossible feat, one that would require both an absolute ferocity on the part of the mutinous slaves and a dose of good fortune, whereby the slaves would somehow be able to amass on the upper decks, the only place where they could effectively engage the European crew in open combat. As far as ferocity is concerned, these slaves, as so obviously were those of the *Meermin*, would prove themselves to be far from lacking. It would rather be this second obstacle, that of getting a good number of armed slaves to the only place where they could confront the Europeans on an equal footing that would prove to be the greatest hindrance to their intentions. Certainly the officers and crew, who believed the slaves to be securely chained below decks, would have considered themselves to be well out of danger; if they were familiar with the tale of the *Meermin*, which a good percentage of them probably were, then they would have felt no less at ease, for on that vessel all reasonable expectations had been scrapped, while here all regulations had, to the best of their knowledge, been scrupulously observed.

By 10:00 am, the Rijksbestierder Saszape had left the Dutch to look forward to what promised to be another dull, uneventful and profitless day. The crew were either going about their basic chores or idling their time listlessly when the first report of an outbreak of violence reached the upper decks. At first, it must have seemed to be not much more than a single act of violence, an assault serious enough in its own right but not necessarily a signal for a larger uprising or mutiny. A member of the watch, Stuurman Jacob Tromp, had rushed up to report to Truter and Andriessen that a sailor, Hendrik Barreveld, had been wounded by a group of slaves. Barreveld was now safe, said Tromp, for he had been assisted by his fellow crew members who had been on

hand when the assault took place. It had happened at the “luijk”, the hatchway that led down to the lower decks where the slaves, together with certain provisions and supplies, were secured. The crew members had rescued Barreveld and fled to the upper decks, where they considered themselves to be safe from further violence.

The officers would definitely have registered significant concern at this news, for it meant that a number of slaves had freed themselves and were possibly intent on forcing their way through the “luijk” to attack the crew on the upper decks. Their concern would have swiftly accelerated to something approaching panic when they heard the second part of Tromp’s message. He went on to say that Barreveld was by no means the only casualty, but that an even greater tragedy had afflicted one of the junior officers. The Tolk (or interpreter) Cornelis¹⁹¹, who had been in the slaves’ hold when the violence broke out, had been murdered; although Tromp could give no further details, and although the continuing violence had prevented the crew from recovering his body, he was certain that Cornelis was dead, and that he had been killed by the mutinous slaves who were continuing to cause an uproar below decks. Tromp must have been a witness, then, to both the assault on Barreveld and the murder of Cornelis, and the fact that Barreveld had been assisted to safety meant that a sizeable party of sailors must either have been in the vicinity of the “luijk” (trapdoor) or below decks with the slaves when the revolt broke out. Sketchy as it is, gauging from this information one can picture to a limited degree what is likely to have happened.

The sailors were responsible for maintenance and related chores both in the area where the slaves were secured and on the decks immediately above and surrounding them. Although they were probably not anticipating an attack such as this (indeed, the shock which registers throughout the relevant journal entries strongly suggests that, as I proposed earlier, the officers and crew, although maintaining a respectable discipline and vigilance, were not mentally prepared for such a large and violent slave uprising),

¹⁹¹ The word “Tolk” denotes the interpreter, usually a Malagasy slave who accompanied slave-trading expeditions to assist with communication. This figure was unsurprisingly hated by the slaves, who, with good reason, perceived him to be an accomplice to those responsible for their misfortune. It is therefore to be expected that Malagasy slaves would violently assault and even murder such a figure if they were given the chance. Furthermore, the loss of such a figure, one who in many ways facilitated the smooth functioning of the trade, could be disastrous for an expedition of this kind. For more on interpreters, see Armstrong, ‘Madagascar and the Slave Trade’, *Omalý Sy Anio*, 17-20, pp. 232-233.

the sailors would likely have congregated in groups for purely practical reasons, to carry out their duties corporately and because space within the lower decks was so severely restricted. What seems most likely to have occurred is this: the Tolk Cornelis had descended into the slaves' quarters to perform some kind of maintenance (evidence for which shall become present later in this narrative), and that perhaps he had been accompanied by Barreveld. If Barreveld had not completely descended with Cornelis into this room, then he must either have been standing on the steps that lowered through the "luijk" on to this deck, or he must have been within a close enough vicinity of the "luijk" that he could easily be reached by someone below. One of the first two possibilities seems to be likely, for if he was severely wounded then he must have been in close proximity to the slaves; however, the fact that he was not killed but was able to be rescued suggests that he was close enough to the "luijk" for his crew mates to successfully pull him up and out of harm's way. It is also possible that there were one or two other crew members below the hatch, and that it was they who assisted Barreveld to the upper decks; if this is so then there could only have been a few of them, for otherwise their mobility would have been severely hampered, and they must all, Barreveld included, been standing at a sufficient distance from the Tolk that they were unable to either assist him or recover his body after the murder. Thus, it would seem that Cornelis had ventured some way into the hold when he was fatally attacked by a large group of slaves, while Barreveld, who was evidently close enough to the fracas to suffer some injury, was at a remove sufficient enough that he could be assisted to safety.

The news that had reached the officers' attention appears, at first, to be highly sketchy. As Truter obviously composed his narrative after the rebellion had been quelled, he was to a certain extent summarizing all that happened that day. However, his narrative also seems to stick closely to the way that these events and their corresponding rationale unfolded as the violence of that terrible day progressed. Thus, he does not reveal at the beginning exactly how the uprising was originally conceived and sprung, but chooses rather to write by faithfully representing the sequence of what happened as each new piece of information was brought to his attention and as he undertook decisions to put down the uprising in consultation with the other officers. The sketchy and somewhat garbled reports that began filtering to the upper decks reflect the confusion that was gripping the crew members who had been witness to the

violence. At this stage, no one yet knew how the slaves had freed themselves, how they had killed Cornelis or even how many of them were actively perpetrating the violence. All they could report was that one of their number had been brutally murdered and another had been injured; the violence would have occurred in such a short space of time, and would have so stunned the crew members who had been witness to it, that they would have been capable of little more than to react instinctively, to grab their wounded fellow and to rush for safety. Indeed, the very fact that they had rescued Barreveld is testimony to at least a certain degree of fellow-feeling among this party of sailors. Thus, the tone and structure of Truter's narrative, whether purposefully or not, allows one to follow the events and their psychological repercussions from the immediate perspective of the crew involved, as they slowly emerged from ignorance and bewilderment to a more lucid conception of what was taking place and a resultant decisiveness in taking action against the murderers.

After hearing of the murder of Cornelis, the officers must have been aroused to the fact that a violent and desperate slave mutiny was under way. However, if any of them had continued to entertain any doubts, then Tromp's next words would have dispelled the illusion entirely. Some of the slaves had freed themselves from their chains, while the others, a number of whom were partially free, were steadily chopping themselves loose. Furthermore, those that now possessed freedom of movement were enthusiastically engaged in breaking the "stutten", the wooden supports between the decks that separated their deck from the rest of the ship. The intentions of the slaves who even as Tromp was speaking were engaging in this aggressive vandalism would not have been lost on the officers. The exact nature of what was happening would have steadily been growing clearer as these events were recounted, and at this final communication the reality of the situation, if it had not done so earlier, would now have been luridly and decisively revealed. This was no common assault by a slave or two who had inadvertently been able to free themselves and had then chosen to take out their frustration on a hapless crew member; nor was it even a riot in the conventional sense of the term, where one might have expected a number of disgruntled slaves to wreak havoc on their deck for a while, to assault and possibly murder any crew member unlucky enough to fall into their grasp and then to finally subside once their rage was spent. Clearly, what was happening here was a full-scale mutiny.

The gravity of the situation would now have impressed itself ever more resolutely on the officers, who, on considering the bits and pieces that had been related to them, would have grown steadily convinced that this uprising was not purely spontaneous but that it must to a certain extent have been the result of careful premeditation. If the slaves were so intent on breaking their way out of the hold to get themselves to the upper decks, then their only objective could be to seize control of the entire ship. While this realization would by now have dawned on Truter and his compatriots, they would still have been largely in the dark as to the size of the body of mutineers and the extent to which they were armed and capable of confronting the sailors in a violent conflict. Their vision of the unfolding mutiny was still based on the scattered comments of startled, perhaps terrified men who had gathered their observations while fleeing for their lives. It is not improbable to suppose that stories of the *Meermin* had flashed through Truter's and Andriessen's minds at this point, and that they began to envision the prospect of the entire ship falling into the hands of the mutineers. If the mutineers were successful, then the fact that they were still in Madagascar would prevent them from being able to pull a clever ploy such as the sailors on the *Meermin* had done; in fact, their immediate proximity to the land from which their slaves hailed would mean that they would most likely simply be murdered, with the mutineers needing to make no consideration as to their future usefulness. Whether such visions did flare through the officers' imaginations or not, the realization that a full-scale mutiny of an equivalent intent to that of the *Meermin* was unfolding just a few decks below where they were standing would not have been lost on them. If they were to not only save their ship but their very lives, Truter and Andriessen would have realized, then they would need to act swiftly and decisively.

Barreveld and Cornelis were not the only crew members to be caught up in the violence. One of the other officers, *Boschieter* Jan Walburg, also entered the fray, and up to the point that Barreveld was whisked to safety, he was the only European to respond to the slaves' aggression with a reciprocal fury. He did this, no doubt, as much out of desperation as of any conscious bravery, for if he had succumbed without a struggle he would have suffered the same fate as Cornelis.

He is described as standing by the “luijk”, and was perhaps in the company of those who successfully rescued Barreveld. He, too, had been on watch, as had Tromp, and so it is likely that he had also been witness to the murder of Cornelis and the assault on Barreveld. If so, then it is likely that what happened next ensued in the fracas that would have erupted when the sailors, grabbing Barreveld, made a desperate dash away from the trapdoor and to safety above. Having observed the assault on their fellow, those sailors who snatched Barreveld would have done so as swiftly as possible and then run with him as rapidly as they could towards the upper decks. As it is not clear from the narrative exactly how many sailors were witness to the violence, it is possible that a large number, perhaps the majority, had simply fled, while those few with sufficient presence of mind and compassion had paused to assist Barreveld before they too made a rapid retreat. Whatever the case may have been, it is fair to say that panic and chaos erupted among the crew (what I have taken a number of pages to describe would have occurred in what was probably at the most a number of minutes), and that, except for those carrying Barreveld, it was simply a case of every man for himself. As the sailors sprinted towards safety it is likely that they did not stop to check if all were safe, not even those who had rescued Barreveld; noble as their gesture had undoubtedly been, they would have been entirely preoccupied with tending to their stricken passenger. If all this were the case then no one would have been aware if Walburg was still in their company; if he had, in fact, been left behind, then this would have made his actions all the more desperate.

Fortunately for Walburg, he was armed when the insurrection broke out, although not with any conventional weapon. Rather, for some purpose that is not made entirely clear, he was in possession of a hammer. Perhaps he had been performing some kind of maintenance to assist the Tolk, although it was as a protective instrument that the tool would prove to be most beneficial. Walburg is described as having been standing by the “luijk” when the fighting began, and from what happened next it is clear that he must have been standing above it, where he was probably witness to the murder of Cornelis in the below him. In the ensuing chaos, with sailors rushing in panic all around, one of the slaves grabbed his legs from below, obviously with the intent of pulling him down so as to murder him. The narrative explicitly states that the slave wanted to get hold of the hammer, and so this must have been Walburg’s direct impression of what had been happening to him. In what was probably an intuitive,

entirely defensive reaction, Walburg swung at the slave with his hammer, delivering a blow vicious enough that the offender let go of his legs; although, given the circumstances, it is unlikely that Walburg's reaction would have been anything but unfriendly.

One would have thought that at this point Walburg would have been satisfied with his escape, and would have made as rapidly as possible for safety. However, his curiosity seems to have gotten the better of any consideration he may have had as to his personal safety. Perhaps he wanted to get a clearer picture of what the situation was like in the slaves' quarters, to ascertain how many slaves were involved in the uprising and by what means they had managed to free themselves. In a certain sense, then, Walburg can perhaps be said to have been a good deal more level-headed than his fellows, and certainly a lot braver; although one could argue with equal force that he was simply foolhardy and lacking in common sense, a contention that can certainly be substantiated by what happened next. He decided to peer below the trapdoor to get a better view of what was happening, but as he did so he received a vigorous blow from a "hand-of-voet-bout" (as shall become clear later, a bolt of some kind) which served to split his upper lip. His curiosity having been assuaged by this emphatic redoubt, he took after the example of his contemporaries and fled the scene. One could say that this unfortunate escapade had in fact enabled him to garner a more complete understanding of what was happening below decks; however, it had been acquired at the cost of a rather more painful ordeal than his fellows had been willing to undergo.

One other officer had also been hoisted to safety. This was another *Bosschieter*, Pieter Dickse Aaij, who had also been on watch, although not above the "luijk" but rather in a more precarious location between decks. Apart from the Tolk, he is the one European who can be positively placed on the same deck as the slaves when the mutineers began their assault. He was, interestingly, also unarmed; and had it not been for a similar initiative on the part of his fellows to that which had rescued Barreveld, it is likely that he too would have met with Cornelis' fate. Why he was unarmed is as unclear as why Walburg had been armed with a hammer, and, moreover, seems to stand against common sense; by including such details so specifically, it is possible that Truter wished to convince the Company that the mutiny had not been put down at

its inception primarily because of the foolishness and negligence of the watch. The factor that did ultimately save Aaij, by placing him in a position where he could be rescued by the crew, was his specific location in the slaves' quarters when the fighting started. When the slaves began to assault Cornelis (and perhaps Barreveld), Aaij fled towards the trapdoor; according to the narrative he did this to warn the crew above, although it is likely that his motives were guided at least as much by a natural instinct of self-preservation¹⁹². When he was half-way up, however, the door was somehow brought down on him (exactly how, or who was responsible, is not specified; it is likely that no one knew for sure, that it was simply one of those unfortunate accidents that inevitably occur in times of mass chaos), and it looked as though he would be left at the mercy of the enraged slaves. He must have been injured, or at least stunned, when the door was brought down on him, and he would probably not have been able to make it out by his own efforts. However, the fact that he was half-way up the stair stood in his favour, for he was now close enough to the crew above that they observed his predicament and were able to effect a rescue. They must have re-opened the trapdoor, for the next event that is recorded is that they pulled Aaij through the "luijk" to the deck above. Thus, a second person had been saved by a blend of good fortune and the gallantry of the crew. What had ultimately saved Barreveld and Aaij, and thus, by converse, what had condemned Cornelis to his brutal demise, would seem to be a matter of chance and circumstance. It is unlikely that the crew had reacted out of particular sympathy towards Barreveld and Aaij while callously leaving Cornelis to his fate, for their bravery, and no doubt their current means of armament, had stopped short of attacking the mutineers outright in an attempt to save the Tolk. Instead, it was the fact that Barreveld and Aaij were at a distance from Cornelis and close to the "luijk" that had enabled their fellows to reach them and so pull them to safety. Cornelis must have been the man furthest from the "luijk" and closest to the slaves, and so it was he who was attacked first and thus suffered the fatal consequences of his unlucky position. For those familiar with the comments of a number of historians as to the lack of fellow-feeling among VOC sailors, it may come as a surprise to read here that some, at least, were willing to give assistance to their fellows in a time of crisis and danger, and did not choose to simply look out for themselves.

¹⁹² Of course, it is likely that Truter's narrative stresses a presence of selflessness and bravado on the part of his crew and officers. Thus, one cannot merely accept the reasons that he includes for particular actions, especially when they are of supposed bravery; instead, they must be interpreted within the context that shaped them.

As the records for the slave uprising are rather scarce on detail, one is forced to infer much of the substance that lies behind the events that are described. This scarcity of detail pertains equally to the question of who undertook direct authority in attempting to quell the rebellion. That decisive action was taken is certainly clear; and as Truter's proficient and capable character has figured prominently in the larger narrative thus far, it is tempting to conclude that it was he who was responsible for organizing the rapid, violent retributive action that followed the initial news of the mutiny. However, bearing in mind that Truter's character as it is represented in his journal is in a sense a self-creation and must therefore be received with the appropriate degree of skepticism, together with the probability that a potential disaster of this magnitude would have been sufficient cause for a more collaborative response on the part of the ship's officers, it is likely that Truter, Andriessen and perhaps Paddenberg and one or two other senior officers collectively devised a plan of action. If Truter was in fact as capable as I have been led to represent him, then it is more likely that he sought some measure of advice from his compatriots than that he relied purely on his own judgment. Considering his outburst before the king of Morondave, he was certainly not beyond reacting instantly and violently to a perceived injustice; and so it is also possible that here, in the face of a potentially devastating threat, he acted purely on impulse. However, on examining the careful and disciplined manner in which the efforts to put down the mutiny were undertaken, it seems most probable that Truter considered the matter briefly with Andriessen and his fellow officers, in order to devise the most rapid, decisive and yet calculated means of crushing the rebellion and disarming the mutineers.

However the decision was to be undertaken, necessity dictated that it be made swiftly. The officers would have realized that it was imperative that they destroy the mutiny before the rebellious slaves were able free themselves in larger numbers and lift themselves to the upper decks; for once there, particularly if the crew were scattered, ill-prepared and unarmed, it would by no means be a foregone conclusion that victory would be on their side. While the slaves were yet confined to their quarters below decks, however, the Europeans still possessed a definite strategic advantage; if they could blockade the "luijk" and join battle with the mutineers from a superior vantage position, then they would be able to contain the mutineers below decks until they had

exhausted themselves, realized the impossibility of their position and elected to surrender. The crew still had the advantage of firearms which, if leveled from a high point on a roomful of rebels, could wreak considerable damage. It was thus imperative that the mutiny be contained and prevented from erupting on to the upper decks, where it would rapidly escalate into a desperate and dispersed skirmish in which the crew would have to engage the mutineers one-on-one throughout the ship.

It was thus decided to dispatch some armed crew members to the “luijk”, to “persuade” the mutineers that their intentions were unattainable and to give them just cause to immediately surrender. The description that follows in the account might appear absurd to us as we read it now, and is almost farcical in its effects. However, in the light of what has just been laid out, it would seem to make sense and to bear the characteristics of perhaps a hasty but yet considered and deliberate scheme.

A group of armed sailors went to the “voorluijk”, which must have been a vantage position from where they could view directly through the “luijk” and into the slaves’ hold beneath; from there, they raised their muskets and fired on the slaves with “ervten en zout”, which translates literally as “salt and peas”. Barring the remote possibility that this phrase is some kind of 18th century Dutch expression that means something else entirely, it must be assumed that the sailors, as incredible as it may sound, did in fact literally fire on the mutinous slaves with salt and peas. Such an odd choice of ammunition can only make sense in the presence of two particular circumstances. Firstly, the slaves could not yet have been in the position whereby a large number of them were free and ready to storm up through the “luijk”; if so, then the sailors would undoubtedly have selected a rather more lethal form of ammunition. Secondly, it must have been decided that at this stage, with the rebels still confined below decks, it was imperative to seek to protect the lives of these slaves, who were still, in the eyes of the Europeans on board, the legally purchased property of the Company. As long as the slaves remained confined as such, one could still attempt to threaten them into submission without inflicting serious physical injury; the menace they posed was not yet such that it would warrant an immediate full-scale assault. Thus, a two-pronged strategy was in play: the officers recognized that this mutiny posed a serious, potentially devastating threat to both their commercial engagements and their very lives if it were to progress beyond the stage that it had; but that at this

moment, given the circumstances that were currently prevailing, it would perhaps still be possible to threaten the mutineers into submission and to salvage the property of the Company without engaging in outright violence. In short, the threat of violence would precede any direct violent reaction on the part of the European crew, and the latter would be committed to only if the mutineers persisted in their revolt.

As it happened, this attempt to quell the rebellion in a more peaceful manner failed outright. In fact, it would seem that the mutinous slaves considered the attempt to be as ludicrous and indeed as comical as one is likewise tempted to find it today.

According to the account, the slaves reacted by laughing uproariously at the armed sailors, who they probably thought must be incredibly naïve if they believed their road to victory would be paved with salt and peas. However, their hilarity did not persist for long. After what appears to be not much more than a few moments of gaiety, the slaves once again gave expression to their rage, and are described as thrusting themselves forward to continue their assault on their chains with a renewed vigour. While the manner in which the mutineers are depicted is obviously tinted by virtue of those who were composing the description, in whose interests it was to illustrate the slaves as an enraged, uninhibited mob with wholesale murderous intentions, one can still appreciate that by now these slaves were in a tremendous uproar, and that this almost insulting attempt by the crew to bring them to heel had served only to aggravate them still further.

The crew members must themselves have been greatly angered by their failure to effect an immediate surrender; it is also possible that they recovered something of the collective terror with which the watch had greeted the initial violence of the mutineers. What is certain is that they came to a swift realization that salt and peas were not going to do much more than amuse and enrage the mutineers in equal measure, and that they would thus be compelled to employ more forceful means, even if such measures were to result in injury and death. Clearly there would be no surrender in the absence of a direct, violent and relentless struggle.

The premeditation of this action is supported by the evident rapidity with which the sailors switched their ammunition. Clearly, they had sufficiently armed themselves with live shot as well as with salt and peas before making their way down to the

slaves' deck. After the slaves renewed their attempts to break free from their chains, the sailors fired again, this time releasing a volley of live shot from their muskets. It is perhaps needless to say that this second volley wreaked a greater degree of devastation than had the first; and this time, most likely to the immense gratification of the crew, the slaves did not respond with jollity. Three slaves were killed in the assault; they were later identified with the names Mannontoea, Tsihangie and Mahatimpahé. (The only occasion in the entire journal when slave names are actually mentioned is in the context of this revolt; it would seem that only by such a violent confrontation could the slaves make their European masters conscious of their own individualities.) Apart from these fatalities, another ten of the mutineers were wounded. Although they had committed themselves to a violent action, the sailors were clearly under instructions to act with a certain restraint, for it would certainly have been within their power to wreak further death and injury if they had so wished. One can thus see this offensive as a second attempt, albeit through more lethal measures, to persuade the slaves that the only means by which they would save themselves would be by surrendering.

While on this occasion the mutineers may not have erupted in laughter, their fury by no means abated. After firing on the rebels, an appeal was made to the slaves to desist from their uproar and to surrender, but once again the overture was met with nothing but derision. Apparently the slaves continued with their vigorous assault on the woodwork of their deck, for they are described as attacking the "schotwerk" with planks. It is of course difficult to ascertain the psychology of the mutineers, who are represented here as almost hopelessly depraved, enraged beyond all reason and capable of only a continuously mindless vandalism. Such a portrait is no doubt a reflection of the officers' worldview, a worldview that was not ideologically equipped to perceive a slave rebellion as anything else but mindless barbarism, but it does make accessing the slaves' mentality difficult, if not impossible. Whether the slaves were as enraged and destructive as they appear, and indeed whether the sailors were as composed as they are represented, one cannot say for sure. What there does seem to have been is a unity of purpose and determination among the mutineers, a determination that perhaps blinded them to the hopelessness of their position. If so, then this would help explain the slaves' continued resistance, without forcing one to agree with the tenor of the account that would have you believe the slaves existed in a

state beyond all reason and were merely flailing around like madmen. As will become clearer later, the revolt had assumed a certain rationality, even if it was a tragic rationality that could never have realized its ambitions, and the actions of the mutineers were by no means without purpose.

To the modern reader of this account, it becomes clear at this point the trajectory in which events were being directed, and which of the two forces engaging in this conflict held the upper hand. The slaves, however, seem to have remained unaware of the balance of power that was so definitively weighed against them; and it would take the further bloody killing of some of their number to begin to convince them. The European sailors held all the advantages, in firepower and in their spatial position, and it would only have taken a further fusillade on their part to inflict an even bloodier chaos on the slaves below. This time, however, the sailors, no doubt on the orders of whichever commander was present, elected to lower their muskets and instead to lob a hand grenade into the mass of bodies crowded around the woodwork. It goes without saying that hand grenades in the 18th century were noticeably less powerful than those of today, and would cause damage only in a fairly small radius around the point of impact. It was perhaps for this very reason that a hand grenade was chosen over the muskets: having already caused considerable death and injury to the Company's human property, it was probably decided that a hand grenade would cause a similarly devastating effect while simultaneously restricting the casualties that would arise from its use. Throughout this conflict, the Europeans had been confronted with what was to them a desperately ambivalent prospect: that in order to put down the uprising and preserve the ship, save their own lives and (of probably the greatest importance to the land bound Company officials back at the Cape) ensure the re-establishment of direct authority over their human cargo, they would have to resort to violence, thus causing considerable damage to this very human cargo that had initiated the threat they were attempting to subdue. The entire strategy of the Dutch would thus appear to have been conceived in order to meet the twin demands of this ambivalence, and thereby attain the objectives while yet limiting the damage of this necessarily violent course of action.

The hand grenade did cause less physical injury than the musket volley, and it succeeded in finally achieving what had been the desired effect of the entire

operation. Two slaves, Tandilie and Tsimitaniek, were killed, and none are recorded as having been injured. Evidently, the range of the hand grenade was limited and intense. If one can point to a marker that indicates where the initiative shifted definitively to the Europeans, then this is it. It was at this point, after witnessing the deaths of two more of their comrades, that the prospect of surrender became more attractive to the majority of the slaves than further violent resistance. This was no doubt precipitated by a further verbal threat from the Europeans, which they issued after hurling the grenade. The Europeans effectively gave the slaves an ultimatum: either they could surrender and thus save their lives, or they would all die where they were, in a small hold below decks on a foreign vessel.

The surrender, however, was not immediate and all-encompassing. According to the account, the slaves gradually handed themselves over, as individuals and in small groups; as they did so, they were hoisted up through the “luijk” and bound with cords. Even after the majority had given themselves up, a small number, totaling seven, remained below and continued in their defiance; but by now they were incapable of effecting even the semblance of a revolt. They stood, surrounded by the corpses of their erstwhile fellows, until Stuurman Tromp, who may well have considered himself to be exacting revenge for the murder and assaults he had witnessed earlier that day, sprang upon them with a party of armed sailors. (As Stuurman Tromp led this assault, it begs the question of whether it was he who had been delegated to lead the party of armed sailors. In the absence of any other contenders for the role, and given the authoritative position that he assumed here, it seems likely that it was he who had overseen this retributive action.) No further violence is recorded, and one can therefore presume that the last few slaves, who most probably consisted of the leadership of the mutiny, gave themselves over without any further struggle.

Now that the mutiny had been quelled, it was possible to piece together exactly how the slaves had been able to organize their bloody revolt. The suddenness with which the violence had erupted had come as a devastating surprise to the European crew, despite their swift and equally violent reprisal; and the officers must have considered their most important task, now that the ship and crew were out of danger, to be to ascertain how it was that such a large group of slaves had been able to free themselves and cause so much violence and injury. After capturing the last remnant, Stuurman

Tromp and his group of sailors were able to inspect the room closely to examine for signs of how the mutineers had effected their release. In the hold they found the body of Tolk Cornelis; they also found scattered around the body four different knives, one file and a hammer (“spijker-hamer”). Tromp must have recovered these items, together with the body of the Tolk, to the upper decks, where he would have presented the former before the officers and reported both on the battle and on the surrender and the subsequent examination that had been undertaken. A conclusion as to what had happened leading up to the murder of the Tolk was reached and then recorded in the account, presumably by the officers, after having heard Tromp’s account and inspected the evidence. The means by which the mutineers had enacted their yearning for freedom had been precipitated, it was decided, by an act of gross negligence, one for which the man responsible had paid for with his life. Cornelis had descended into the slaves’ hold with a chest of tools and sharp implements, presumably in order to carry out some kind of routine maintenance job, for the tools that were found near the Tolk’s body matched those that would have originally been enclosed within the chest that Cornelis would carry with him when performing such tasks.

While the Tolk was so engrossed in his work, his chest, which he had probably left somewhere behind him and out of his range of vision, would have been left open. The officers came to this conclusion because no other possibility could so readily explain how it was that the slaves got such easy access to his tools without the owner’s notice. The chest must also have been left within easy reach of the slaves, thus adding an even more substantive weight to Cornelis’ negligence and culpability. The slaves would have quietly removed the implements from the chest and then, with the Tolk still oblivious to his impending fate, would have rushed him and killed him right there as he was at work, with his very own tools. Cornelis’ dedication to his duties must have been of such a single-minded intensity as to exclude his assuming even the most basic precautions; for it would have been while he was turned away from the main body of the slaves, engrossed in whatever it was that he had been delegated to perform, that he relinquished the discretion that would otherwise have saved his life.

The conclusions that the officers had reached were confirmed when they interrogated the mutineers themselves. No information is provided as to how many slaves were

questioned and by what means the interrogation was carried out; but it is probable that they first questioned those slaves who had surrendered last, who by virtue of their stubbornness in battle were likely to have been the instigators of the rebellion. By whatever means it was prosecuted, the interrogation provided remarkably illuminating results, perhaps because by then the ringleaders would have sufficiently sobered to the extent that they realized their best chances for future clemency relied on them coming clean. By their own confession, there had been four identifiable leaders of the mutiny; their names were Rijpie, Tsimant, Rijzoemak and finally Mannontoea, who had been shot dead when the sailors had opened fire with their muskets. It would seem that it was these four who had murdered Cornelis and, by so doing, had riled the other slaves into an uproar. Rijzoemak had been the first to attack the Tolk, by striking him in the face with his fist; the others had then rushed to Cornelis and surrounded him, beating him to death with the tools they had stolen from his chest. These tools would then have been used by a large number of slaves, including the ringleaders, to strike the chains that restrained them, thus enabling a quite substantial amount of them to at least partially free themselves. The slaves had been chained in pairs; by the time battle was joined with the Europeans, two pairs of slaves had freed their hands and feet, and four pairs had freed their hands. This totals twelve slaves who were at least partially free and able to participate in the violence. At what point Barreveld, Walburg and Aaij were attacked still remains unclear, as this short and sparse account does little to clear up the more intricate questions; but while Cornelis must have been within striking range of the slaves while they were still chained, it is possible that the others, further away from the main body of slaves, were attacked some moments later after a number of the rebels had freed themselves and were able to move around without restraint.

The intentions of the mutineers had been premeditated, but simple. It was discovered that the impetus had come from the slaves who had been purchased at Morondave, among whom the desire to take control of the vessel and sail it back to their home had been fomenting since they had been brought on board. On reflection, the plan they had made to achieve this aim appears hopelessly naïve, and must reflect the ignorance of these Malagasy slaves towards both the structure of the vessel on which they were imprisoned and the strength and armament of the forces they would have to defeat in order to attain their objectives. Of course, the reasoning of the mutineers should be

expected to appear over-simplified and perhaps even ridiculous in this account, as it would thus cohere to the overall tenor of its representation of the mutineers as irrational, bloodthirsty and savage. The key features, however, are still worthy of observation. Firstly, the slaves had desired to put the “Tolken” and all the other Europeans to death. This indicates, firstly, that the slaves saw the Europeans as a whole as directly responsible for their state of enslavement, and thus fitting for a violent death, and secondly, that they believed themselves capable of manning the ship without the assistance of the European crew. The mutineers on the *Meermin* had shared similar sentiments on both counts. They too had set about murdering all the crew members that had fallen into their hands, without any attempt at discrimination, and only those that reached the safety of the barricaded *Constapelskamer* had escaped a brutal death; and, likewise, they had considered themselves capable of sailing the vessel without assistance. It was only after a few days, when it had become clear to them that their navigational skills indeed were lacking, that they agreed to the compromise with the crew that would ultimately set in motion the events that led to their downfall. Both of these apparent coincidences can be traced to a commonality in the collective impulse behind both mutinies.

The second impulse that lay behind the mutiny appears at first glance to be equally straight-forward. The ringleaders, and probably most of the mutineers themselves, were slaves who had been brought on board at Morondave; and it had been their intention, once they had overrun the ship and put all the Europeans to death, to sail the vessel back to Morondave. It is telling that the very place where they had embarked on this foreign vessel as slaves is the very place that they intended to return to once they had gained their freedom, and it once again raises the question of where these slaves had come from, as well as why they would have selected Morondave, where they must have spent some time in captivity prior to their purchase by the VOC, as their destination once they had regained their freedom. As has been discussed previously, it is impossible to gauge exactly where any of the slaves purchased on these voyages would have come from through the records at hand, although I have attempted to elucidate a number of possibilities. What is more pertinent to this discussion, however, is the similarity in intent between this rebellion, and that which happened on the *Meermin* in 1766. For those slaves, after slaughtering a large number of the crew, made an agreement with the surviving Europeans, in which they

demanding that, in return for their lives and protection, the European crew sail their vessel back to Madagascar, and return the slaves to the localities from which they had been brought on board.

Clearly, then, there is a similarity both in purpose and intent, as well as organization, strategy and means, between the mutinies on the *Meermin* in 1766 and that on *De Zon* in 1775. The difference in outcome is due more to the dissimilar circumstances pertaining on board the ships, and the relative obstacles that the two bodies of mutineers had to surmount in order to achieve their objectives, than to the plans and intentions of the mutineers themselves¹⁹³. In both of these examples, one can see a manipulation of circumstance at play; and it is in the distinctives between these practical circumstances, and between how it was that they were manipulated in each episode, that the divergence in both the features of the mutinies and their final outcomes can be traced.

Firstly, both mutinies were organized by particular leaders, and as such were not entirely spontaneous eruptions of unorganized violence. On *De Zon*, four leaders were clearly identified as being behind the uprising; while in the case of the *Meermin*, it is possible to highlight three such leaders. In the latter case, the man acknowledged by the slaves as the overall ringleader was shot dead on the beach when he came ashore in one of the vessel's boats; while the other two, Massavana and Koesaaij, were sent to Robben Island for observation once they had arrived, with the other mutinous slaves, at the Cape¹⁹⁴. The fact that such leaders could be identified so rapidly and definitively would strongly suggest that both mutinies were organized centrally, albeit loosely, upon a hierarchy of sorts, and that they were, to varying extents, premeditated. In both cases, the slaves had been quick in taking advantage of circumstances that had been presented to them, and it is testimony to the respect for and authority of both leaderships that they proved so effective in doing this. A disparate group of individual slaves, with little social cohesion or centralized organization, would not have been as successful in making such rapid and effective use of circumstances, no matter how advantageous, to inflict such heavy blows on

¹⁹³ I will be exploring this at a later stage in the chapter.

¹⁹⁴ Alexander, 'The Mutiny on the *Meermin*', BA Honours Thesis, Historical Studies Department, UCT, 2004, pp. 38 and 49-50.

their captors, and in the one case to actually succeed in assuming authority over the ship and the European crew.

This leadership was clearly supported by a mass base of slaves, who agreed with the intent of the rebellion and fought under their leaders for a common goal. It may initially be difficult to see this principle at work, given the apparently random violence of the mutineers when at the height of their fury. It is probably true that in the midst of both uprisings, that many of the mutineers did not consciously associate the overarching intentions of the rebellion with the violence of their actions; the fact that on the *Meermin* the slaves attempted to kill the entire crew, and that on *De Zon* they attacked not only the sailors below decks but the wooden fixtures and supports that were in their deck, attests to the fact that both groups were in a deep rage, and were steadily savaging any symbols of their state of servitude that they could lay their hands on¹⁹⁵. Despite this, however, it is clear that the intentions articulated by the leaders were shared by the larger body of mutineers. On *De Zon*, when the leaders were interviewed after the rebellion had been quashed, the *scheeps-raad* arrived at the conclusion that the vast majority of the slaves had supported the uprising and were implicated in some way with the murder of the *Tolk* Cornelis; and, moreover, that a plan to take over the ship and sail back to Morondave had been hatched at some point after a substantial number of slaves purchased at Morondave had been put below decks. On the *Meermin*, there was a similar unity of purpose among the mutineers; the way in which they coalesced into a cohesive force so rapidly after the initial murders had taken place and, after what was probably a period of collective reflection, presented a clear and coherent overture to the European sailors to take them back to Madagascar, indicates that those mutineers were also organized, in some form of voluntary submission to a centralized authority and possessed of a singleness of purpose.

The planning of the mutiny on *De Zon* was facilitated by the fact that a large number of slaves, purchased from a particular location, had been quartered in a single large hold, where they would have been able to converse with little distraction. Similar

¹⁹⁵ As was alluded to previously, by murdering the *Tolk* they were savaging one of the most potent symbols of not only their enslavement, but of the perceived treachery that had been necessary to effect it.

conditions would have pertained on the *Meermin*, and it would have been under these circumstances that the respective leaders would have come to the fore (how exactly the leaders instituted their authority is difficult to say), that the possibilities of enacting a mutiny discussed and a unity of purpose among the slaves achieved. The *scheeps-raad* that was held on *De Zon* after the mutiny arrived at this very conclusion, a conclusion that is certainly not unreasonable in its assertions. The mutineers on *De Zon* were well prepared for violent action; they just needed the circumstances to be right before they could act. The premeditation of this mutiny is emphasized by the swiftness with which the leaders, supported by what seems to be the majority of their fellows, rose almost as one to kill the *Tolk* Cornelis when the slightest opportunity had presented itself, and the rapidity with which they then galvanized their fellow slaves into a full scale revolt. If anything, it was their impatience that got the better of them; for while they may have found themselves suddenly in the position to kill the hated translator, the other circumstances that governed their predicament were simply not conducive to the success of a slave rebellion, no matter how large or well-organized.

The ways in which the leaders of both mutinies were treated by the Dutch after their respective surrenders reflects something of the confusion experienced by the VOC officials in the face of these violent, almost devastating uprisings. I have mentioned that Massavana and Koesaaij were sent to Robben Island for observation, in the hope, it appears, that further light would be shed on the mutiny and how it had occurred¹⁹⁶. In a similar fashion, the *scheeps-raad* on *De Zon* elected to have the three surviving leaders of the rebellion to be chained, in isolation, in different sections of the ship (two in the prow and one under the forecandle); while the only slaves to actually receive any severe punishment were not the leaders themselves, but two other male slaves, Mankenna and Arondohobohaij, who were found to have defended the ringleaders. They were whipped, and then put back below decks with the other slaves. Thus, while in both cases the VOC officials had been able to identify the ringleaders, they proved uncertain as to exactly what to do with them; and the lack of severity adopted towards these leaders, given the extensive human and material damage that had been caused, remains something of a mystery. In fact, the treatment of the

¹⁹⁶ Alexander, 'The Mutiny on the *Meermin*', BA Honours Thesis, Historical Studies Department, UCT, 2004, pp. 49-50.

mutineers here stands in stark contrast to that on the *Drie Heuvelen*, where the punishment meted out on both the ringleaders and the larger body of complicit slaves was a good deal harsher. Ravell claims that each of the slaves was sentenced to a flogging, while the ringleader who had survived (the other having been killed in the revolt) was broken on the wheel by a fellow slave and then given the *coup de grace*¹⁹⁷. Perhaps the fact that the larger slave bodies of the *Meermin* and *De Zon* were not punished, despite their obvious complicity, is an indication of how the labour shortage that the Company was constantly struggling against at the Cape could restrain the retributive inclinations of VOC officials, even in the face of such direct and violent challenges to their authority and property, and of their resultant willingness to overlook the actions of these slaves so as to continue to meet the objectives for which both voyages had been dispatched in the first place.¹⁹⁸

In essence, then, there is a definite similarity in purpose, intent and execution between the slave mutiny on the *Meermin* in 1766 and that on *De Zon* in 1775. Both were to a certain extent premeditated, both took immediate advantage of particular circumstances to enact a violent resistance, both were organized under an identifiable leadership, both sought to murder all the Europeans on board and, finally, both had as their intention a return back to the slaves' port of origin. However, the one met initially with immediate success, and was only to be defeated at a later stage by a most remarkable set of circumstances; while the other never succeeded in even allowing the mutineers to escape their place of captivity, and was thus quashed before the slaves were in a position to impose their authority over the vessel and its crew. The reasons for this vast divergence in outcome can be traced, largely, to the differences in shipboard discipline and authority that existed on the two ships, as well as to the material nature of the circumstances that shaped the choices adopted by the respective bodies of mutineers.

In my earlier work on the *Meermin*, I went into considerable detail on the discipline and authority that pertained on the vessel at the time of the mutiny, and of how this

¹⁹⁷ Ravell, "The VOC Slave Trade Between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1795", p. 38.

¹⁹⁸ The surviving ringleader of the revolt on the *Drie Heuvelen* was dealt with in a much harsher fashion. He was sentenced to be broken on the wheel by another slave, to be given the *coup de grace* and then to have his body thrown overboard. See Ravell, "The Slave Trade between Cape Town and Madagascar, 1652-1795", p. 38.

state of discipline, or lack thereof, was one of the primary reasons both for the mutiny's occurrence and for its success¹⁹⁹. One can attribute a decrease in discipline on board the *Meermin* to the performance of the two senior officers, Krause the merchant and the captain, Gerrit Christoffel Muller. The actual events that led up to the mutiny are clearly documented in this thesis: the slaves being allowed up on deck after sickness had broken out, their being unchained and granted complete freedom of movement around the vessel and finally, of course, the disastrous decision by Krause to delegate the task of cleaning Malagasy assegais to these very slaves. On top of all this, Muller had been sick himself and thus confined to his cabin, and his presence on board was thus severely compromised. From the records, a number of the earlier decisions were taken by Krause and Muller in concert with one another, or even by Muller alone; and, bearing in mind that Harmse had been compelled to assume some measure of Krause's duties at a strategic moment during the voyage of *De Neptunus*, it seems that six years had not been sufficient for Krause to completely dispel his reliance on junior officers to assist him in making crucial decisions.

Muller's complicity in creating these conditions was recognized by the Council of Justice, who on 30 October 1766, together with one of his mates, Daniel Carel Gulik, was sentenced to be demoted and banished from the Cape. Both parties were found to have been negligent in the proper execution of their duties; and had Krause survived the mutiny, it would be safe to say that he, too, would have received a similar sentence, or perhaps one even more severe. It is unnecessary to go into much further detail, for the import of the sentence, and indeed of the testimonies that were compiled from officers and crew during the trial, is that the senior officers of the *Meermin* were collectively guilty of gross negligence. They had allowed their hold on authority and adherence to good practice to deteriorate, to the point where the slaves were not only free to roam the ship at will, but were provided with lethal weapons, the use of which they were highly familiar with, on the orders of no less a personage than the merchant himself. The apparent absurdity of these actions which led up to the mutiny, which at times seem to be rather the creation of a comic or a satirist than actual historical events, may even partly blind one to the disorder and disarray that was afflicting the crew, and of which this final absurd decision was its most extreme

¹⁹⁹ Alexander, 'The Mutiny on the *Meermin*', BA Honours Thesis, Historical Studies Department, UCT, 2004, pp. 58-69.

symptom. The evident lack of strong, cohesive and careful authority on board the *Meermin* clearly evolved conditions that were more than ripe for enabling the victory of a violent slave uprising; and it was this laxity that, more than any other single factor, enabled the mutineers to consolidate themselves so effectively and then to act with such triumphant resolution.

All of this might appear as a rather convoluted attempt to describe what is not only patently obvious, but what is more than anything else entirely practical: namely, that the slaves of the *Meermin* were able to move freely on the ship and had access to weapons, which was what ultimately allowed them to surprise the crew and take authority over the ship. The slaves on *De Zon* were clearly not able to do this. The reasons for their incapacity also comes down to questions of shipboard discipline; for, from a reading of the journal of *De Zon*, there emerges a portrait of the social temper on this ship that is very different from that of the *Meermin*. I have, on a number of occasions, contrasted the character of Truter with that of Krause; and in a comparison of the two mutinies, this contrast is highly pertinent. Truter was a man who, even in moments of stress, exudes a sense of control and decisiveness, exemplified partly by the control he exerts over his own written narratives. Given the skepticism that a historian must harbour towards records of this calibre, and accounting for the problematic aspects of the journals²⁰⁰, one cannot accept this characterization in its entirety without some reservations. Nevertheless, the circumstances in which the mutiny was crushed bears testimony to the decisiveness of Truter and his officers, a decisiveness and dedication to duty that was decidedly lacking among the majority of the officers of the *Meermin*. When the mutiny broke out, the response was rapid and resolute, even to the point of committing to violence. Had the reaction been tardy, it is not impossible that the slaves would have fought their way to the upper decks, in which case the outcome might have been very different.

As a result of this superior presence of on-board discipline, the mutineers of *De Zon* were severely inhibited by their circumstances. They had not been allowed on to the upper decks, there to move freely about the ship; and, most significantly, they had not been granted such easy access to dangerous weapons. Their rebellion, although

²⁰⁰ See introduction.

premeditated in its intent, was transformed into a spontaneous seizure of inauspicious circumstances, in the sense that after murdering the *Tolk*, there was little the mutineers could then do, in the face of such a violent and disciplined riposte, to effect their freedom. The tools that they acquired from the *Tolk*'s chest would never have been enough to wage battle against an armed crew, and the material conditions that continued to give form to their predicament, the narrow steps and trapdoor that was their only route out of their prison to the rest of the ship above them, prevented even such a large mass of slaves from gaining the strategic momentum and physical armaments necessary to defeat the VOC crew. Caged below decks, most of them still enchained, they were, as the events recounted in the journal so dramatically reveals, easy targets for VOC gunmen situated above them, against whom their efforts would prove to be nothing but in vain. These factors raise the possibility that this mutiny, despite the preconceived intentions of its participants, was in fact little more than an impulsive affray, ignited by the perhaps spontaneous murder of the *Tolk*. Conditions were ripe for the murder of the translator and the injury of a number of crewmen, but not for any further victories; on the contrary, the evident discipline of the officers and crew and the material conditions that so severely restricted the autonomy of the slaves, effectively prevented this attempted mutiny from enabling its participants to even free themselves from the very deck where they were imprisoned. It remains impossible to ascertain the exact degree to which the mutineers on *De Zon* effectively rationalized their actions. However, despite my previous insistence on the slaves' cohesion, premeditation and subscription to a particular intent, the presence of spontaneity cannot be discounted; although one could certainly argue that such spontaneity was as much a feature of the mutiny on the *Meermin* as it was on *De Zon*. Such a mutiny as this, however, in the absence of similar conditions to those on the *Meermin*, was inevitably doomed to a tragic finale.

A slave uprising raises a number of interesting questions of its own regarding the diversity of experiences, inter-personal and inter-group dynamics and material and social conditions that inform this multifaceted and sometimes contradictory historical phenomenon. In recent decades, a significant amount of original, thought-provoking research has been conducted on mutinies and other forms of maritime resistance, with a particular emphasis on the Atlantic Seaboard during the 18th century. In the world of the VOC Indian Ocean, the scholarship is rather more limited; although some recent

efforts have shed light on a fascinating realm that was just as replete with violence and insurrection as its more popularly famous Atlantic counterpart. Of particular interest is the work of English historian Mike Dash, who has completed an account of the planned mutiny and subsequent shipwreck of the *Batavia* in 1628 that, although intended for a popular readership, is both academically credible and highly worthwhile²⁰¹. However, much of the effort by historians working in this field has been devoted to sailor mutinies, and the comparative attention that has been granted to those staged by slaves is rather limited. This is no doubt partly due to the fact that mutinies by sailors are rather more common than those by slaves. However, the work conducted by these historians is still useful in illuminating, firstly, both the commonalities and the disjunctures between the two forms of mutiny, and, secondly, in shedding some light on the variety of attitudes and perceptions that shaped relationships between seamen and slaves during the 18th century, and of how these perceptions would become manifest in violent action during such mutinies.

Perhaps it is best to start with the work of two historians who, working both individually and in tandem, have opened a wealth of insights and conjectures about the Atlantic maritime world of the 18th century. These two historians are Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker; their work, which has approached iconic status, has been largely concerned with uncovering the roots of revolutionary movements in the present-day United States and Britain to the underclass that developed in the emerging modern maritime economy of the 18th century. They have associated the wellsprings of these revolutionary movements largely with sailors, slaves and other workers within this maritime world, who, they claim, developed from their common experiences of oppression an anti-authoritarian, collectivist consciousness²⁰². The eminence of these historians' scholarship has not saved them from criticism; and it is part of my intention here to provide a moderate critique, from the perspective of the VOC in the western Indian Ocean during the same era, of any attempt to universalize the assertions and implications located within their studies. Nevertheless, their central thesis remains the most provident starting point for this discussion, which is itself a

²⁰¹ See Mike Dash, *Batavia's Graveyard: The True Story Of The Mad Heretic Who Led History's Bloodiest Mutiny*, 2002, particularly pp. 73-131. These two chapters include Dash's narrative of a planned mutiny on the *Batavia* by the skipper, Ariaen Jacobsz, and the under-merchant, Jeronimus Cornelisz, who attempted to organise a revolt against the upper-merchant, Francisco Pelsaert.

²⁰² Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p. 154.

prime indicator of the rich wealth of ideas and detail embedded within their scholarship.

In Rediker's book, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, he describes how confrontations over "power, authority, work and discipline" on board merchant vessels in the first half of the 18th century, which he labels as a class confrontation, created an "oppositional culture" among common seamen, a consciousness that was antagonistic towards established authority²⁰³. Such an oppositional culture was framed within the material confines of the ship, where a sailor's "incarceration" within an extremely limited space was coupled with his subjection to a harsh, often brutal disciplinary authority from above²⁰⁴. Thus, the collective consciousness of men aboard such ships was largely fractured along lines of class, rank and authority; and it was from the ranks of the common seamen that a particularly strong anti-authoritarian tendency emerged.

Linebaugh and Rediker extend this line of argument in their collective effort, *The Many-headed Hydra*. Of particular interest is their discussion of sailor resistance to the maritime state; most specifically, they highlight mutinies and piracy as the two most extreme, outward forms of such resistance, and they go on to explore the latter in extensive detail²⁰⁵. Their intention is to demonstrate the range, depth and particular manifestations of the resistance of the sailor underclass to the established authorities of the developing capitalist maritime order, and they do so with an often invigorating sensibility.

That there was, to differing measures, a revolutionary consciousness among sailors that grew and became more explicit over the course of the 18th century is now, due to the efforts of historians such as Linebaugh and Rediker, a historical hypothesis that has been met with increasing approbation. When one examines a particular mutiny in close detail, however, it is often the case that the range of motive and initiative that conditions the rebellion defies any neat, static inscription. For example, the mutiny that was planned on the *Batavia* in 1628 before it ran aground on an island off the

²⁰³ Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, pp. 154-155.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 159.

²⁰⁵ Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, pp. 156-160.

coast of western Australia was hatched by the captain and the under-merchant, both of whom resented the manner and person of the upper-merchant²⁰⁶. Tensions among the senior officer corps on some ships could therefore be as much the cause of mutinous intent as disgruntlement on the part of the oppressed seamen; and the fact that these officers were able to mobilize a portion of the crew to their cause is testimony to how a mutiny could be instigated by one senior officer against another with the complicity of members of the sailor “underclass”. However, in terms of the mutinies aboard the *Meermin* and *De Zon*, the problems move beyond the fractures in social cohesion among the officers and crew. One is forced to ask how slave mutinies would influence the relations among European officers and their crews, and what this then reveals about the relative consciousnesses of sailors and slaves, and the extent to which a common revolutionary impetus among such underclasses can, in fact, be ascribed.

In both of the mutinies that I have explored, the crews were most definitely united in their efforts to put down the rebellions. This, of course, was no doubt largely a reaction to the evident intent of the mutineers to murder every single one of them. While this may appear obvious and not worthy of historical comment, it does reveal how the threat of extreme violence could unite a seaborne community that, in the absence of such a danger, was probably riddled with dissonances within its social constitution. It is unlikely that either of these two crews were without the internal tensions and conflicts that historians such as Linebaugh and Rediker have described; and while the journal of *De Zon* does not detail any concrete examples of such discord, the fact that three sailors had deserted in Madagascar, a forbidding and still largely unknown environment, suggests that the lower orders of the ship’s company were not without their dissatisfactions. Of first and most obvious importance, then, the internal ruptures and divisions among a VOC crew could be temporarily effaced when confronted with such a directly violent and murderous threat, and a threat, moreover, emanating from another faction of this so-called “underclass”.

Uniting together to combat a common enemy is, of course, entirely what one would expect from any community, no matter how internally fragile; and the capability with which the crew of *De Zon* did so is testimony to the strength of her on-board

²⁰⁶ Dash, *Batavia's Graveyard*, pp. 73-131.

authority, the evident respect for such authority among the various strata of her company and a greater degree of genuine social cohesion among her crew than that pertaining on certain other ships, of which, for the purposes of this analysis, the most notable example is the *Meermin*. However, both mutinies reveal the substantial disjunctures in collective consciousness between sailors and slaves on these two vessels; and this, perhaps, is partly indicative of the dissimilar conditions that distinguish the Cape-Madagascan slave trade from that of the Atlantic. One can find nothing approaching a common revolutionary, anti-authoritarian and anti-maritime establishment ideal in either of these two mutinies. Rather, it is the very absence of Linebaugh and Rediker's features that is so striking. Both revolts were constituted in submission to a Malagasy authority that very probably bore some reference to authoritative structures with which the slaves would have been familiar from home. More importantly, the mutinies do not reveal a direct revolutionary confrontation with the institutions of a capitalist, mercantilist empire; on the contrary, they reflect an intent that appears, comparatively, to be rather prosaic, a return back to Madagascar and a freedom from this particular form of enslavement. No direct challenges to any social, political or economic institutions, or against any generalized social order, were effected. Speaking simplistically, the slaves wanted to get off the ship and go home.

To a certain extent, the conditions of the Madagascan trade are manifest within the dynamics of the slave mutinies. The sailors and slaves on these voyages would have had little cause or capacity to develop anything resembling a common revolutionary consciousness. These were recently acquired slaves, who no doubt were disoriented by their imprisonment within this alienating environment and who would have had little conception of the unique authoritative and disciplinary mechanisms that were maintained on European vessels. There would have been little opportunity for conversation, and the opportunities for inter-class and inter-communal contact that were perhaps more pronounced in the Atlantic were severely restricted. Perhaps the most definitive factor, however, is the fact that slaves and sailors did not work side by side on these vessels. The development of a common revolutionary consciousness would have required an extended period of contact between sailors and slaves, to germinate a commonality in experience from which an integrated, class-based resistance to oppression could have been shaped. Sailors and slaves would have needed to interpret their harsh reality in inclusive terms, such that they were

cognitively enabled to make collective cause against the maritime authorities²⁰⁷. The conditions necessary for the evolution of such a collective sense of grievance were lacking in the Cape-Madagascan trade.

This being said, the extent to which a generalized model of an internationalized cooperative revolutionary consciousness comprising sailors and slaves can be predicated for the Atlantic has itself been criticized in a number of quarters. Philip D. Morgan, for one, believes it is important to modify the portrait that Linebaugh and Rediker have painted²⁰⁸. He asserts that some of the features that Linebaugh and Rediker claim as representative of this consciousness were certainly present in the Atlantic (and the events and incidents employed by Linebaugh and Rediker do much to illustrate the definite presence of such features), and that there was a greater degree of interracial harmony and even cooperation among European sailors and African sailors and slaves than there was among their landward contemporaries²⁰⁹. However, he also demonstrates how the institution of slavery itself was almost never directly questioned by European sailors, and that racial prejudice and animosity was by no means absent from naval and merchant ships in the 18th century Atlantic²¹⁰.

This certainly qualifies the implications of Linebaugh and Rediker's vision, and goes some way to explicate the ambiguities evident in the mutinies on the *Meermin* and *De Zon*. No direct common cause among sailors and slaves can be located; it was, after all, the sailors who the slave mutineers wanted to kill. These two mutinies demonstrate, above all, the disjuncture between the world of the VOC seamen and that of the newly acquired Malagasy slaves. As such, they can perhaps be viewed as counter-examples to those employed by Linebaugh and Rediker, illustrative of a divergent sphere of mental process, collective intent and actions of resistance. The lack of even an emergent common revolutionary consciousness, the sharply drawn antagonisms between the two sides and the brutal violence meted out, at different intervals, by both communities, does much to question the validity of a romanticized,

²⁰⁷ Linebaugh and Rediker make this emphasis in their argument. For example, they describe how sailors and slaves of various racial groups, through their contact in the Caribbean during the late 1700s, were able to exchange stories and ideas on insurrection and were thus able to forge something of an integrated revolutionary worldview. See Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p. 241.

²⁰⁸ Morgan, *Empire and Others*, p. 62.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, pp. 59-60, 62.

²¹⁰ Ibid, p. 60.

revolutionary perspective on the world of VOC slavery in Madagascar; while the conjectures that have been offered in its stead can perhaps be extended to include reference to the larger Indian Ocean world, and perhaps that of the Atlantic as well.

The intense rage and violence that accompanied both mutinies, and the direction in which this violence was directed, provides a further frame with which to analyse this form of slave resistance. I have mentioned on more than one occasion that the mutineers, once they had gained, or partly gained, their freedom of movement, almost instantaneously set about attempting to murder all the Europeans in their midst; and in the case of *De Zon*, they also applied themselves to demolishing wooden supports and structures on their deck, in a manner that may appear as irrational, even absurd. It may seem as such to us, for as much as we may attempt to empathize with the predicament of these slaves, such an attempt will always remain an act of historical imagination; and as such, it proves continuously difficult, no matter how familiar one may become with the conditions of slave capture and enforced servitude, to truly grasp the depth and extent of the anger of the enslaved. However, reflection will yet enable one to understand such actions more fully than one might initially suppose. In both cases, I would argue, a very real and heartfelt expression of rage was united with a deeply symbolic action, fusing in such a way that it is not a simple matter to neatly distinguish the one from the other. To speak of the Malagasy slaves as being “consumed with rage” is not necessarily to patronize or homogenize; for as we have seen, neither rebellion was a mob affair with random acts of self-gratifying violence, but rather were carefully organized, coordinated and premeditated. An emphasis on the anger of the slaves brings us close, in fact, to their historical condition; for if one is really to get to grips with these mutinies, and with others that occurred on VOC vessels and on ships of other slaving nations, then one has to account for the violent rage that almost invariably accompanies these mutinies. Of course, it is difficult to analyze it, so much as to take note of its presence; for thus may one acknowledge the psychological traumas that not only undergird historical events such as these, but that give them their form. As both these cases so clearly demonstrate, the brutalities of the slave trade and the marine crossing could breed reactions that were no less brutal; and it was in events such as these that those engaged in the traffic of human beings were confronted with a horrific vision of the terrifying ambiguities of their vocation.

That aspect of the violence that is open to analysis, the symbolic action that was manifest within its performance, is no less important than the scale of the rage that prompted it; for it is in this that one can detect a method in what initially appears to be a chaotic madness. To begin with *De Zon*, it should come as no surprise that the slaves seized the first opportunity that came their way to murder the *Tolk*, even if, as indeed it turned out, other circumstances were not conducive to the success of the ensuing mass revolt. The *Tolk* was the VOC interpreter, the official hated most intensely by the slaves, who recognized in him the primary responsibility for their impending enslavement in a foreign land. Of course, on historical reflection, it is problematic for the scholar to invest in the *Tolk* this level of overall responsibility; but it is for this very reason that one may inscribe this accusatory responsibility as largely symbolic. While it is clear that the slaves eagerly desired to murder the entire crew, it seems that this man, in particular, was doubly perceived as a symbol of their enslavement, and thus more than worthy of death. The murder of the *Tolk*, then, as much as it marked the inception of the rebellion, was a symbolic action that one can explore in terms internal to its execution. Whether by this time the slaves had mutually agreed that they were sufficiently organized to mount their mutiny, and were merely awaiting an opportune moment, or whether no such concord had been reached but that the opportunity to kill the *Tolk* was simply too difficult to resist, is probably impossible to say for sure; but it cannot be ascribed to pure coincidence that it was the *Tolk*, murdered in such an apparently callous fashion, that was the spring for the larger mutiny. The murder of the *Tolk* was a symbolic blow against the commercial apparatus of *De Zon* as a VOC slaving vessel; and in this act one can perceive that the hatred held towards the *Tolk* was itself largely symbolic. This mutiny was thus founded on the murder of a symbol, so to speak; for in striking this blow, the mutineers instigated a wholesale attempt to dismantle, quite literally, the edifice of *De Zon* as a VOC slave trading enterprise.

In this light, the slaves' attack on the fixtures and supports of the ship seems less remarkable, and may in fact be compared to the slaves on the *Meermin* in their massacre of a large proportion of the ship's crew. One may ask why it was that the slaves would seek to destroy the very vessel on which they were confined, which would be their vehicle back to their community of origin, as well as the murder of those who were equipped to navigate her; and on this level the action is indeed not

rational. However, bearing in mind that the Malagasy slaves were largely unacquainted with either the vessels of European traders or the means of sailing them, one can see the attack on the ship and its sailors as of equally symbolic significance to the murder of the *Tolk*. For these slaves, enchained in a claustrophobic space below decks, stuffy and with an extremely limited freedom to move, the ship itself must have come to represent their state of enslavement, with all its attendant brutalities and discomforts. Hence the attack on wooden fixtures and supports within the deck itself; again, while in one sense it may have been an expression of rage, in another it was a symbolic attack, an attempt to physically dismember that which, both literally and figuratively, was a space of confinement and captivity. While the attack on the *Meermin*'s sailors (and, of course, that on the sailors of *De Zon* who were below decks) is obviously of a different order, there are similar undertones that undergird the violence. The sailors, as a body, would also have possessed a symbolic import in the eyes of the mutineers; and it was an import that, particularly in the case of *De Zon*, was reflected upon during the mutiny's premeditation. As has been mentioned, it was the intention of the mutineers to murder the entire crew (once again undercutting any notion that the revolt was a blind act of uncontrolled rage), a sentiment that to a certain extent was probably shared on a conscious level by the mutineers on the *Meermin*; and so the slaves were acting according to a preconceived course of action when they began the violence, a course of action that was far more symbolic than it was practical. While the *Tolk* may have been particularly hated, the rest of the crew would also have been viewed as representative of enslavement, and, moreover, an enslavement that had removed them from all that was familiar and had placed them in a constrained space, on a journey the destination of which they almost certainly knew nothing. The sailors, so closely associated with the ship and hence with the traumas of their condition, would have likewise assumed symbolic status as representatives of the brutal privations of captivity; and so the rapid, coordinated attempt by the mutineers to murder the sailors, while perhaps not rational on a practical level, is certainly understandable as an act of consciousness, a violent vengeance directed at the representatives of the institutionalized violence and brutality that was the slave trade itself.

Bearing all this in mind, it is possible to consider this uprising as much an attack on the slaving institutions of Madagascar as on that of the Europeans. While from a

present-day perspective one naturally views the European merchants, officers and crew as separate entities from the local Malagasy, connected through participation in a contractual relationship, there is nothing to suggest that the Malagasy slaves saw things in the same light. It is very possible that the slaves perceived the Dutch to be as much an integral part of the local institutions of servitude that had subjected them as the local kings and officials, and that their being transported to the ship was merely the next stage in this subjection. It is of course unlikely that either the Europeans or the locals took the trouble to explain to them where it was that they were headed; and while these slaves would no doubt have been aware that others like them were on occasion sold beyond the bounds of familiar localities, it does not necessarily follow that they appreciated that such a process entailed a removal from one communal entity, with its attendant norms and legalities, to another. In this sense, the rebels were not necessarily distinguishing between two separate institutions of oppression when they rose up that day. The perhaps more intriguing possibility is that the murder of the Tolk, the attacks on the sailors and the attempts to dismember the material structure of their prison was an attack, perhaps spontaneous but yet coordinated in its execution, on the edifice of slavery as it was conceived within the consciousness of its protagonists; and that within this collective consciousness, the two parties in the trading relationship were not differentiated as such, but were treated as a single polity whose depredations demanded violent resistance.

The Tolk is thus situated as a central figure, one who effectively connects the Malagasy slavers with their European trading partners and is representative of both institutions within his person. As such, it is unsurprising that he would have been so hated, and that the slaves took the first opportunity that came their way to murder him. The fact that the presence of one who, like them, was a Malagasy slave, could raise such intense ire is testimony to both his practical and his symbolic function. Practically, he was the one perceived to enable the functioning of the slave trade; while symbolically, he represented to the slaves the focal point upon which the practice of coercion, as it had been negotiated between the Malagasy officials and the Europeans, was established. Thus, while there were clearly two separate communities responsible for their enslavement, they were, in a sense, synthesized by virtue of the immediate presence of the Tolk; one could perhaps go so far to say that it was this very tangible presence of the Tolk, a figure familiar in speech and tongue and yet

apparently responsible for within the hostile, alien environment of the ship, that enabled the slaves to effectively incorporate the Malagasy and the Europeans into a single cognitive entity. Thus, the murder and the attacks on *De Zon* of 29 August were not so much directed against the Europeans as a distinct community as they were against the institutions of coercion that would more distinctly have associated with the local court than with a political power from across the seas.

Much of what I have said above is speculative, although I believe it is a speculation that is faithful to the sources. However, it is also crucial to keep in mind that the intentions of the mutineers were essentially to escape their prison, and that any conception of a symbolic attack on the institutions of slavery must remain cognizant of this comparatively prosaic perspective. While entertaining such speculations may be fruitful to contemporary attempts at comprehending the machinations of slave consciousness, one cannot overestimate the symbolic to the exclusion of the immediate and the practical. *De Zon* was anchored close to shore, a fact that would not have been lost on the slaves; however, a factor of which they would probably have been unaware due to their lack of knowledge on contemporary European maritime technology, was the material strength and bulk of the ship on which they were imprisoned. Their attempt to physically break free from this prison was thus doomed from the start. In this, one may perceive a certain irony: that the slaves were, unwittingly, as much a victim of their own misconceptions and ignorance as they were of the brutalities of those who had subjected them, be they Malagasy or European.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this dissertation, I stressed that my intention was two-fold. My first objective was to depict the material structure of the trade, and thereby to develop a meaningful analytical model that would allow for a comprehensive understanding of the techniques of commercial diplomacy through which the Cape-Madagascar slave trade was arbitrated. To accomplish this, I attempted to generalise the constants of the VOC-Malagasy encounter from the patterns evidenced within the records of these selected voyages, particularly as they can be deciphered in terms of ritual, negotiation and accommodation. This perspective allows one a glimpse into a period that is representative of the trade as it existed in the latter decades of the 18th Century, a period where commercial encounters were mediated by established protocols that had evolved during the many decades of contact between Europeans and the inhabitants of the Great Island. This relative constancy of ritualised encounter is indicative of a cross-cultural trading relationship whose continuity depended in large measure on a mutually acceptable practice of self-representation, and was shaped overwhelmingly by commercial imperatives.

However, if on one level the trade was marked by a stability of form, it could, paradoxically, also accommodate moments of tension and flux. My second objective has been to evoke and explore moments such as these. Such an objective has not lent itself to a didactic so much as to a narrative purpose, one that seeks to interpret such moments and locate them as distinct and unique. It has been necessary for this purpose to eschew generalisation, and instead to attempt the particularisation of historical experience. As such, by illuminating the ambiguous realities of perception, misunderstanding and personal antagonism, these moments, explored predominantly in Chapter 2, serve as something of a subversion to the stability of pattern and form described in Chapter 1. The narrative of the slave uprising in Chapter 3 fulfils the same purpose, although from a different angle. By seeking to burrow beneath the surface (figuratively and literally!) of a particularly extreme and violent conflict, and by incorporating essential events and details within an interpretation that is speculative and yet constrained by fidelity to the sources, I have sought to extend the discussion of perception and antagonistic encounter to that of a third, often invisible party, the slaves. This attempt evokes a possibility that, although speculative, perhaps

remains the most ambiguous and yet revealing of all: that the slaves, the human merchandise on which all of these encounters were founded, incorporated the Europeans and Malagasy within a single frame of reference, against which they allied themselves in aggressive resistance. Thus were these often antagonistic trading partners conflated in the consciousnesses of those they both had subjected, a subjection from which this fractious relationship was itself derived.

Of course, the variety of angles and approaches that have given shape to this work are derived from its central method, that of a close analytical and explicatory reading of several distinctive episodes. It is an approach that has lent itself to a particularistic narrative and to an attendant interpretation of detail; and, as I wrote in my introduction, it is this defining motif that separates it from the other historical work that has been completed on the Cape-Madagascan slave trade. While it has drawn extensively on this previous scholarship, its primary intention has been to convey, to as complete an extent as possible, the singular historical experience of European slave traders, Malagasy monarchs and officials and Malagasy slaves at certain distinct moments in the 1760s and 1770s. While on the one hand these episodes can be representative of elements that transcend their historical moments, on the other they were exceptional and never to be repeated. It is in this singularity, a singularity that I have attempted to evoke and illuminate, that their richness and worth resides; for as necessary as general patterns are for sketching the outlines of this historical experience, it is in the corresponding sphere of episodic incident that one obtains the shades and colours necessary for an illuminative and multi-hued portrait.

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