

Small-Scale Slave Trade Between Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope

From 1728 to 1737¹

Herman Tieken

This contribution is a reconstruction of the small-scale private trade in slaves between Cape Town and Colombo conducted by a Ceylonese Chettiyar,² Nicolaas Jurgen Ondaatje, who had been forced to live in Cape Town as a convict. The chapter is based on a unique set of private letters written in Tamil found in the notarial archives in Cape Town. It addresses the thin line between convict life and slave life and focuses on why and how Ondaatje came to trade in slaves, and the problems his family had with the transition from local bondage to European slavery, or their reluctance to send slaves from their household to a strange country they associated with exile. The Tamil letters provide us with a Chettiyar perspective on the world of the enslaved within the VOC realm and in that sense differs from the contributions by Carter, Geelen, Ekama and Wagenaar in this volume, who work from records produced by Dutch and French bureaucracies. But like those contributions it deals with themes such as mobility, autonomy and intimacy that touched the personal lives of those living in bondage, convicts and slaves alike.

Nicolaas Jurgen Ondaatje from Colombo, Ceylon, was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.³ Proficient in Dutch, Sinhala and Portuguese besides his native tongue of Tamil, he had been engaged by the Dutch minister Joan Bernhard Noordbeek in Galle, Ceylon, as a “bookkeeper” who would serve as interpreter and middleman. In 1727, when his employer was found guilty of a crime that has remained unspecified and was as a result evicted from office, Nicolaas shared his patron’s fate. He was exiled to the Cape of Good Hope for a period of ten years. The crimes that Nicolaas and Noordbeek were accused of have remained a mystery as the relevant court documents have been lost, but it can be speculated that they had aroused the suspicion

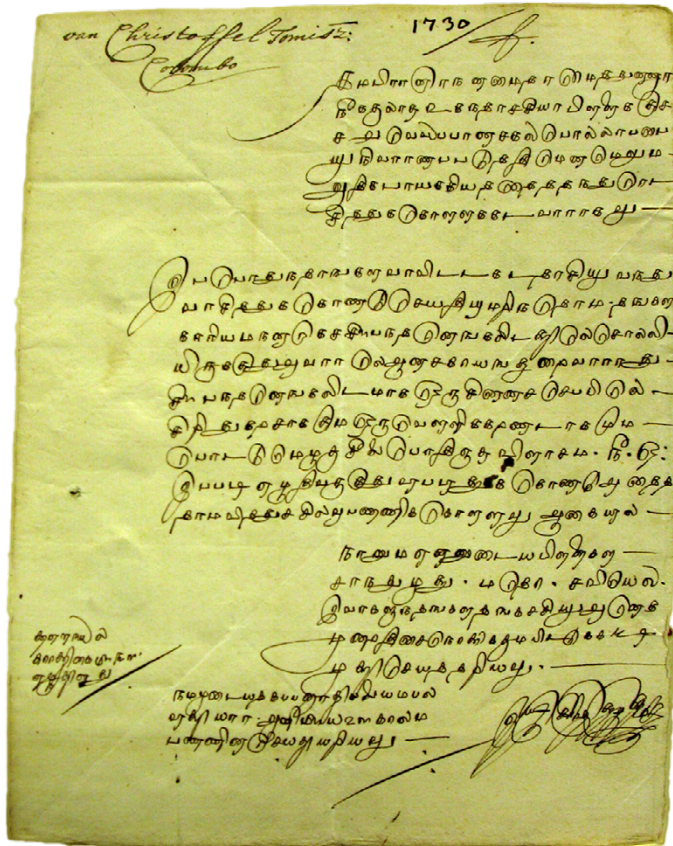


Figure 2.1. A letter dated 3 November 1730 from Nicolaas Ondaatje's brother-in-law Christoffel Tomisz. From Colombo.

Source: Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Cape Town, SA.

of the paranoid governor, Petrus Vuyst (1726–1729).⁴ In Noordbeek's case the implementation of the sentence was postponed and, in the end, the conviction was quashed altogether. Nicolaas's sentence, however, was carried out immediately. He arrived at the Cape on 14 February 1728, which we can be certain of as his name was entered into a ledger.⁵ Next to this entry the word "*overleden*" (passed away) is found. From other papers related to Nicolaas we know that he died quite unexpectedly between the end of July and the end of August 1737, when his period of exile was about to end.

During the decade between Nicolaas's arrival at the Cape in 1728 and his death in 1737 he maintained contact with his home country through letters.

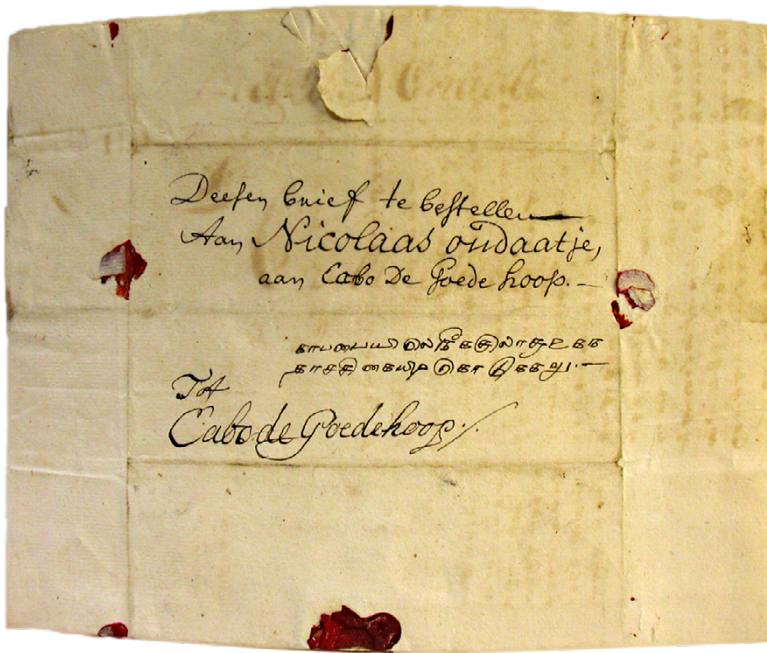


Figure 2.2. The cover letter dated 12 January 1737 from Ondaatje's brother-in-law.
Source: Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Cape Town, SA.

His own letters are lost, but those he received from Ceylon—70 in all—have survived. Disciplined bookkeeper that he was, Nicolaas kept the incoming letters in a file which, after his death, passed to the Orphan Chamber in Cape Town and is now part of the collection of the Western Cape Archives and Records Service. Apart from a few in Dutch and one in Sinhala, the incoming letters are in Tamil. These letters make a unique contribution to knowledge about the experience of being an exile. They bring to life the voices of his family and highlight their sense of loss and their difficulty in coping with the banishment of a close family member to the other end of the world, and reveal how they tried to grapple with these difficult circumstances. From their words it is also possible, if only in part, to reconstruct the life of their exiled son and brother. In contrast, in other sources from approximately the same period and the same part of the world, accounts of exiles' experiences far from home have often been distorted by a third voice, a poet's voice, as well as literary conventions, which require a somewhat different approach. Ronit Ricci and Sri Margana have done an excellent job reconstructing the

lives, experiences and perceptions of Javanese royalty in exile, based on babads or Javanese historical chronicles. Others, like Jean Taylor and Kerry Ward, have used inventories made by the Orphan Chamber in Cape Town of the possessions of individuals who died without making a will and the petitions of exiles or their families submitted to the local governors.⁶ So far, no source comparable to the Ondaatje letters has been found.

The letters addressed to Nicolaas, by members of the Ondaatje family and by friends, rarely feature extensive outbursts of grief. Instead, they recount news of marriages and births, illnesses and deaths, jobs and promotions. Understandably, many pages are taken up by news and practical matters. They also describe parcels sent to Nicolaas mainly containing clothes and pieces of cloth, and in one case sliced areca nuts and a nut slicer—items that a South Asian could not do without! The parcel also contained seeds, particularly of citrus trees and coffee plants. The coffee seeds were accompanied by detailed instructions on the type of soil in which they should be planted: “soil like we have in the area behind the fort here in Colombo” (Letter 59). The writers also gratefully acknowledge the receipt of barrels of salted cabbage and red wine that Nicolaas had sent, and describe how, in line with his instructions, these delicacies had been distributed among his family and friends. It is clear that these goods were meant to make life more comfortable rather than being objects of trade. In one parcel, however, Nicolaas’s elder brother Willem had placed a small piece of paper between the clothes which reads, “I have written down the prices of the goods in this box. I do not ask you to pay me these amounts. I merely mention the prices so that you know them in case you want to sell any of these items” (Letter 10). After the cabbage and wine were distributed among family and friends, what was left was sold and the profit was used to pay for the clothes sent to Nicolaas. The letters often end with long lists of family members and acquaintances who wished to be remembered to Nicolaas. These letters thus give an intimate picture of an urban elite from Colombo and Galle, which functioned as a close-knit network maintained through marriage and mutual support, and whose main ambition was to be employed by the Dutch East India Company. This chapter will read these letters for insights into enslavement in the Cape of Good Hope and for the complex relations between slaves, convicts and other forced migrants and exiles.

As we do not have the letters written by Nicolaas, for information about his life at the Cape we must draw on passages from the letters he received, in which the correspondents respond to issues raised by Nicolaas about his

own circumstances. There are also other papers available at the Cape which provide more direct evidence, among them papers concerning the winding up of Nicolaas's estate from the Orphan Chamber. Furthermore, there are personal papers which Nicolaas seems to have kept in the same file as the letters, such as an IOU related to the purchase of a slave, an IOU for money he borrowed less than a month before his death, and a *memorie boek* in which he kept track of money borrowed and lent, and wrote down the names of the pupils he taught.

Although technically a convict, Nicolaas was allowed to move about freely.⁷ He had the mobility but not the official status of a *vrijswart*—a freed slave or “Free Black”.⁸ For example, he was never listed on the census as other *vrijswarten* were, nor did he appear on Governor de la Fontaine's 1731 list of free inhabitants, which included “*vrijswarten, of ex-bandieten*”. Nevertheless, he was termed a *vrijswart* in all his probate documents (e.g., MOOC10/4.154).⁹

Nicolaas earned his keep, first as a medical doctor and a trader, and subsequently (from 1733 onwards) as a home teacher in Drakenstein, teaching Dutch to the children of the Fouché, Faurie, Haarhof, Radijn, Malherbe and de Jager families. Nicholaas's choice of profession as a teacher may well have been inspired by Jan Smiesing, a teacher in the Slave Lodge in Cape Town, whom he appears to have known. Nicolaas lent money to a man named Jan Joosten, who was married to a first cousin of Smiesing, and he was well acquainted with a certain Christiaan Wijnands, who was married to another of Smiesing's cousins.¹⁰ It is not unlikely that the Tamil medical recipes found in Jan Smiesing's notebook, now in the Cape Archives, came from Nicolaas Ondaatje.¹¹ We know that Nicolaas received from his family in Ceylon two books containing medical recipes, along with roots and pills to prepare medicines with, and elaborate advice on how to administer them (Letters 2 and 10).

These same two books were found in the inventory drawn up by the Orphan Chamber of Nicolaas's estate after his death in August 1737. Nicolaas had no direct heirs. While in the letters there is talk of a son—his brother Philip tells him not to be so embarrassed about the fact that he had one—this son was probably not officially acknowledged (Letter 43). Apart from these two books, the estate consisted of only some pieces of clothing, some buttons and earrings, and some boxes with odds and ends (*rommeling*). Given that Nicolaas was a home teacher living with his employer, his estate did not include any furniture or slaves; therefore, it is all the more curious to note that during his ten years at the Cape Nicolaas seems to have owned slaves.

As a Free Black or exile, he was permitted to own slaves. He bought his first slave at the Cape itself. In later years, he asked his family to buy them for him in Ceylon and send them to the Cape. In what follows I examine passages from two letters concerning these transactions. They make interesting reading—the first one because of the reservation expressed by the correspondent about sending slaves to such a faraway, unknown country; the second because it includes a report of a near-shipwreck in Colombo harbour. In the correspondence there is one more passage about slaves being moved from Ceylon to the Cape, but Nicolaas was not directly involved in this instance. In a letter dated 1732, one of the correspondents asked Nicolaas to find out what had happened to a slave woman who had been taken with him by Governor Simonsz in 1708 when he sailed from Ceylon to Holland via the Cape. She had been sold by Simonsz at the Cape to a Free Burgher and was manumitted a year later. Nicolaas managed to trace her, and she became an important contact for the correspondent in setting up a small-scale wine trading business between the Cape and Ceylon.

As mentioned, Nicolaas bought his first slave at the Cape. Among his papers is a document that records a payment of 60 *rijksdaalders* (Rds) for a slave called Anthonij van Bengalen:

Bekenne Ik onderget: voor reek: van Dirk
 Wesbergh soldaat in dienst der E.comp: thans bij mijn
 ouders in leeningh, ontfangen te hebben úijt handen
 van nicolaas o[n]datje van Colombo sitti¹²
 een somma van sestigh rijxd¹³
 sprúijtende wegens koop en transport van seekere
 jongen genaamt anthonij van bengalen
 Door den voornoemde dirk wesbergh aan den voor
 noemde nicolaas ondatje van Colombo deúgdelijk verkogt
 in demneere derhalven bijdeesen genoemde Nicolaas
 ondatje van Colombo voor namaninge onder verbant als
 na regten

Kabo de goede hoop adij 4 Jùlij 1729
 N. Brommer¹³

There were no ships from Ceylon or India to the Cape during this period, but there were several ships from Batavia. It is therefore not clear whether

Anthonij van Bengalen (who, going by his toponym, probably came from India) was a recent arrival—it is not unlikely that he had already been in the Cape for several years before being bought by Nicolaas. It is also unclear what happened to him. However, a year later, in 1730, Nicolaas asked his family to buy him two male slaves. He asked for the slaves to be purchased in Ceylon as he believed they were much cheaper there, as indicated in a letter from late 1731 in which his elder brother Philip felt the need to warn him that since he had left Ceylon the price of slaves had gone up considerably. It also becomes clear that Philip was not very happy with Nicolaas's request (Letter 29):

Last year you asked us to buy two good slaves, male slaves, and send them to you. If you haven't changed your mind since then, you need not do anything, dear brother. But you should know that while at that time (when you were sent into exile) a slave cost ten *reals*, now you won't get one for less than thirty or forty *reals*, if at all. If that is no problem, there is no need to write to us. However, while we do keep slaves in our homes here, that does not mean that we have no hesitations sending them thither. I want you to know that [if I do not commit myself] it is because of that.¹⁴

Philip clearly did not understand how Nicolaas in his present situation could even think of transporting slaves from their own familiar Ceylon to the Cape at the other end of the world. On the other hand, the circumspect way in which Philip raised his objections made it easy for Nicolaas to maintain his request. However, we have no evidence that Nicolaas did persist, insisting that his brother act against his conscience. In any case, in subsequent letters Philip remained the same faithful and helpful brother. However, when in 1736 Nicolaas again needed slaves, he did not ask his brother but turned to Domingos Dias, a teacher at a school attached to Wolvendaal Church in Colombo, who, after learning that Nicolaas had become a teacher as well, had begun a correspondence with him. Due to circumstances that he elaborately describes in his letter, Domingos Dias failed to get the boy on board the ship in time (Letter 65):

In your letter you asked me to look for a servant. I did find one. After I had agreed to pay 37 *reals* for him I made an advance payment of one *pagoda*. I asked Señor Lopes, the Foreigner, to speak to the captain of a Mocha ship which was about to depart, who next agreed to take the

boy on board. It was also agreed that the full sum would be paid to the owner of the boy only after the boy had been taken on board, for in the meantime he might run away and abscond. However, the night before the day we were to bring the boy on board, the ship, called “De Boot”, was thrown on the beach by a strong north-east wind. But because it was a strong new ship, it did not break. For seven or eight days the employees of the Company in Colombo, Chettiyars, Paravars [fishermen], Moormen [moslims], Karaiyars [fishermen, maritime traders] and many others all worked closely together and with a great effort and by the Lord’s mercy succeeded in getting the ship afloat again. It was saved without any damage. As the Mocha ship was moving into the direction of Galbokka, making water and tugging at its anchors, moving this way and that, the storm subsided into a gentle breeze. That was how it was saved. However, its *boot* and *schuitje* had broken down on the rocks on the beach. Five sailors, who had been in them, drowned. The whole of Colombo grieved as one man. However, the very next day, after the wind had subsided and before I had been able to bring the boy on board as agreed, the captain of the Mocha ship had raised the sails and left.

It is unclear why *De Boot* was called a “Mocha ship” here, as there is no evidence that it ever went to Mocha in Yemen. *De Boot* arrived in Ceylon on 11 November 1736, straight from Middelburg in the province of Zeeland in Holland, which it had left on 3 January of that year. From Ceylon it sailed for home via Batavia and the Cape. The ship reached the Cape in July 1738, where it remained from 31 July to 12 August 1738. It is fortunate that the boy was not on board, for he would have arrived in Cape Town almost a year after Nicolaas’s death.

Why did Nicolaas need slaves? He may have been buying slaves for his friends in the Slave Lodge (the large building where Company slaves were housed), as Lodge slaves scheduled for manumission had to provide a slave in exchange.¹⁵ (It is a mystery how these exchange slaves were obtained by people who were themselves lodge slaves.) On the other hand, he may have initially bought slaves for himself. During the first year, or years, of his exile, Nicolaas lived in Cape Town where he rented a house for himself, much to the dismay of his mother who told him not to waste his money on such luxuries; in her opinion, a single room should do. Furthermore, his family had given him some money to tide him over the initial part of his exile. During his stay in Cape Town, Nicolaas mixed with Christian Free Blacks,

befriending Jan Joosten, as well as Christiaan Wijnands and Jan Smiesing.¹⁶ He was confident that he would be able to make a decent living in Cape Town, one that would allow him to afford a slave, who may have been the abovementioned Anthonij van Bengalen, bought in 1729. Gradually, however, his life as an exile may have grown more difficult. At the same time, he would not have failed to notice the difference in slave prices between the Cape and Ceylon, which remained considerable even after prices in Ceylon had risen. Here was an opportunity for him to make some money—using his status as Free Black, which allowed him to own slaves, he could import them from Ceylon ostensibly for himself, but in actual practice sell them. It is unclear, however, whether Nicolaas made any profits from this enterprise. For one thing, it is not certain whether his brother Philip sent the two slaves that Nicolaas had asked for. It is also highly unlikely that, when asked again, he would have been prepared to send a second batch of slaves after the first one in 1731. Furthermore, ships' captains clearly had other priorities than to fulfill a promise to transport a frightened young slave to the Cape.

The slave trade between South and Southeast Asia and the Cape was well organized, albeit illegal. High-ranking naval officers and repatriating officials transported individual slaves to the Cape and sold them in Cape Town.¹⁷ In a postscript to his letter from 1732, the school teacher Domingos Dias asked Nicolaas to find out what had happened to a pair of slaves who had been taken to the Cape almost 25 years earlier by Governor Cornelis Joannes Simonsz (1703–1707), where he was to review the state of the colony on behalf of the Council of the Indies (Letter 33):¹⁸

When Governor Señor Simonsz was on his way to Holland he sold his servant, named Hannibal, our godson, and his wife, a Bengali woman, named Flora, to a Free Burgher at the Cape. Later, after the Free Burgher had died, the Señor (i.e. Simonsz), on leaving for Holland, set them free. Afterwards, Hannibal died. After that, that woman Flora married someone else. If I remember well his name was Frans. Flora is a Bengali and very short. Could you find out and let me know if she is still alive. For, when Hannibal was still alive, he sent me a barrel of cabbage. I still have the 10 *reals* with me which I made out of selling the cabbage. Having found out where she lives I could send those ten *reals* to her. Or you could give them directly to her. In that case, you give her the money and ask her to sign a receipt. Send this letter with her signature to your mother here and I will give the money in cash to your mother.

Nicolaas did find Flora; however, her second husband was not called Frans but Karel Jansz van Bombay. Contact between godfather and godchild was re-established, and in all his subsequent letters Domingos Dias asked Nicolaas to order one or two barrels of wine for him from Flora's husband, Karel, and mentioned how much money was to be paid out to her. Unfortunately, the story, which almost sounds like a fairy tale, does not reveal the grounds on which Simonsz had managed to accomplish the manumission of the two slaves whom he had sold—the same Simonsz, moreover, in 1708 was the first to restrict the ability of Capetonians to manumit their slaves. To prevent slave-owners from leaving old slaves to the care of the Church's poor fund, they had to guarantee that the slaves would be able to take care of themselves for the first ten years after attaining their freedom.

The 70 letters provide us with a fractured picture of the social complexity of the settlement and the interactions that took place between “lower-ranking Company employees, sailors, soldiers, servants, convicts and exiles”.¹⁹

As stated previously, in their letters the correspondents kept their grief over Nicolaas's absence to themselves, except for, not unexpectedly, his mother Juliana Rodrigo. In her very first letter, which she dictated to her son-in-law Christoffel Tomisz and signed with a cross, she expressed the hope that her son would be present at her funeral and would throw a handful of earth on her grave (Letter 4). In a letter sent in 1734, Philip writes, “Our mother still loves you so much; she is dying to see you. Of all her sons she is thinking only of you and cannot stop crying. Whatever we say to console her, she does not hear it” (Letter 43). The others—the men—stick to general, hackneyed phrases, saying that they miss him and look forward to the day he will return.²⁰ However, Nicolaas's exile worried them greatly. To the very end they continued making plans to shorten Nicolaas's exile. In the initial letters, they suggested that Nicolaas travel to the Netherlands and, if that were not possible, to Batavia, to argue his case before the authorities there. However, they had clearly overestimated Nicolaas's prospects, though it cannot be ruled out that in his first letters Nicolaas himself painted far too positive a picture. After that, the family decided to approach the governor of Colombo with the aim of appealing to him to reduce Nicolaas's sentence and to permit him to return well before the end of his term. At the end of 1733, however, the appointment of the new governor, Diederik van Domburg, was postponed to allow him to go to Batavia to clear his name of accusations of corruption. The following year, the family learned that a similar request made by the family of an exiled Muslim was refused as the governor had not had the power

to alter Council of Justice decisions since 1732. (It is notable that although several members of the Ondaatje family were employed by the Company as interpreters, translators and tax collectors, they were apparently unaware of the change in the Company's administrative rules.) After that, the family stopped trying to shorten the period of Nicholaas's exile. The family's efforts were instead directed towards ensuring that Nicolaas would be allowed to return after he had finished his term, as permission to return needed to come from both the governor of the Cape and the governor's counterpart in Colombo. The family had a copy made of the original verdict which was sent to Nicolaas and which could be shown by him to the authorities at the Cape to prove that he had indeed completed his term. They also wanted to send Nicolaas through their networks a gold chain, with which he would be able pay for his journey back home, but, unfortunately, the goldsmith was unable to finish the chain in time.

Time and again the correspondents mention these plans. It is clear that Nicolaas's exile was a topic fervently discussed at every family meeting—meetings which included his mother Juliana. Family members also requested the help of acquaintances and their contacts in the administration of the Company, such as Nicolaas's brother Philip's employer, Arnoud de Lopes, head of the Accounts Office; Daniel van den Hengel, who had recently been appointed fiscal (prosecutor) at the Cape; and Wetzelijs, an influential minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Colombo where the Ondaatjes were members. Though there is no evidence that Nicolaas's exile had had a negative influence on the family's career prospects, it is clear that within the family it was a constant source of worry and anxiety. As we do not have the letters written by Nicolaas, we do not know to what extent he fed these worries. In any case, his career at the Cape was not a success, and his move from Cape Town to the outlying districts may have been a sort of exile within an exile. Letters from him, however—whatever was in them—brought at least some measure of comfort, as becomes clear from the family's response when, in 1734, they complain of not having received any news from their son and brother in the Cape. As for Nicolaas, his family's suggestion that he go to the Netherlands or Batavia must have made it clear to him that they had no idea of his situation and that he was more than ever left to his own devices. The reports of their failure to approach the governor and to send Nicolaas the money he needed for the return journey will only have deepened his feelings of desolation.

We have no direct accounts of what Nicolaas thought of his existence as an exile. And the indirect evidence is ambiguous, allowing for different and

sometimes opposite interpretations. Nicolaas's attempts to procure slaves from Ceylon may suggest that he believed that transportation from one part of the world to another was not so painful an experience as to make him want to spare others. The family was of the opinion that he should. However, it is also possible, and much more likely, that he was so desperate for money that he could not afford such sentiments. There is indeed some evidence that in the last days of his life Nicolaas had lost complete control over his affairs. A month before his death he borrowed the large sum of 22 Rds, an amount that is not mentioned in the inventory of Nicolaas's possessions that was drawn up by the Orphan Chamber after his death. This suggests that it had been spent that very month, probably on bribes paid as part of his efforts to see the governor. We do not know if Nicolaas succeeded in handing the copy of his verdict over to the governor nor, if he had indeed managed to do so, what the governor's reaction was. All we know is that he died suddenly. A month before his death, he had still been in perfectly good health, as is made evident by the firm hand with which he had signed the IOU for the 22 Rds.²¹ Was his death accidental, or was it related to the denial of permission to leave? On this aspect the archive is silent. The Ondaatje letters remain a fascinating source for understanding the means by which the subaltern—both convicts and slaves—managed to stay in contact with their homes while forging new ties and creating new networks while in exile. Commodity trade and slave purchases are indeed practices that historians would rarely associate with forced migrants.

Notes

1. Large parts of this chapter were drawn from my article, "Letters Dealing With the Slave Trade From Ceylon. The Ondaatje Correspondence, 1728 to 1737," *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 67, no. 3 (2013): 113-122. The Ondaatje Letters were edited and translated by me in *Between Colombo and the Cape. Letters in Tamil, Dutch and Sinhala, Sent to Nicolaas Ondaatje from Ceylon, Exile at the Cape of Good Hope (1728-1737)*, Dutch Sources on South Asia c. 1600-1825. Delhi: Manohar, 2015.
2. The Chettiyars are a merchant caste originating in the coastal area of South India, in present-day Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In the nineteenth century, many of their members progressed from being simple salt dealers into international traders and bankers. The Chettiars in eighteenth-century Colombo were mainly servants of the Dutch East India Company.

3. The name is also spelled as “Ondatje”. Ondaatje is the Dutch version of Tamil Ukantacci or Ontacci (pronounced “Ughandacci” and “Ondacci” respectively).
4. The direct cause of Noordbeek’s conviction seems to have been a letter from the commander of Galle, Johannes Jenner, complaining that the minister had postponed the celebration of Holy Communion for one week without his permission. A month before, however, Jenner had written that Noordbeek did have permission for the postponement (*Generale Missiven van Gouverneur-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, Deel 8, 1725–1729, GS 193: 187). It is unlikely that Jenner made this U-turn without having assured himself that Governor Vuyst would not prosecute him for perjury. It may well have been Vuyst who had urged Jenner to write the second letter condemning Noordbeek. After Noordbeek’s subsequent rehabilitation, Nicolaas’s family expected Nicolaas also to soon be rehabilitated, which suggests that the cases against Noordbeek and Nicolaas were closely related.
5. WCARS, *Annotatie boeck der personen soo van Batavia en Ceijlon alhier aangeland 1722–57*. A photograph of the relevant page from the *Annotatie boeck* can be found in Herman Tieken, *Between Colombo and the Cape*, 4.
6. In the book edited by Ronit Ricci, *Exile in Colonial Asia: Kings, Convicts, Commemoration*. Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2016, two examples of such literary sources on the lives of exiles are dealt with. The exiles in question belong to Javanese royalty and the sources are *babads*, or Javanese historical chronicles. See Ronit Ricci’s own contribution, “From Java to Jaffna: Exile and Return in Dutch Asia in the 18th Century” (94–116), and the chapter by Sri Margana, “Caught between Empires: *Babad Mangkudiningratan* and the Exile of Sultan Hamengkubuwana II of Yogyakarta, 1813–1826” (139–64). Other written sources on exiles’ lives dealt with in the same publication are the inventories made by the Orphan Chamber in Cape Town of the possessions of individuals who died without making a will (see Jean Gelman Taylor’s chapter, “Belongings and Belonging: Indonesian Histories in Inventories from the Cape of Good Hope” (165–92), and the petitions of exiles or their families submitted to the local governors.
7. Most *bandieten* were confined to specific areas.
8. See, for instance, Wayne Dooling, *Slavery, Emancipation and Colonial Rule in South Africa*. Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2007.
9. Photographs and transcriptions of the relevant documents can be found in Herman Tieken, *Between Colombo and the Cape*, 39–43.
10. See Robert Shell and Archie Dick, “Jan Smiesing, Slave Lodge Schoolmaster and Healer, 1697–1734,” in *Cape Town. Between East and West*, edited by Nigel Worden, 128–152. Johannesburg, Hilversum: Jacana, Verloren, 2012).

11. Archie Dick, "The Notebook of Johannes Smiesing (1697–1734), Writing and Reading Master in the Cape Slave Lodge," *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 64, no. 4 (2010): 159–174.
12. *Sitti is chetti(yar)*, the name of the community or subcaste Nicolaas belonged to.
13. A summary: "I, undersigned, acknowledge to have received on behalf of Dirk Wesbergh, soldier in the service of the Company but now as *knecht* living at my parents'(s farm), from Nicolaas Ondaatje from Colombo, Chettiyar, the sum of sixty *rijksdaalders* for the sale and transport of a boy (slave) called Anthonij van Bengalen." N. Brommer is Nicolaas Brommert, son of Jan Brommert and Anna van Schalkwijk, who had joined the Company in 1725 as an assistant and had become a Free Burgher in 1730 (see *Resolutions of the Council of Policy of Cape of Good Hope*, C. 100, 40–42, dated 27 August 1736, endnote 6).
14. With this I retract my translation of this elliptical sentence given in *Between Colombo and the Cape*, 124.
15. See James Armstrong and Nigel Worden, "The Slaves, 1652–1834," in *The Shaping of South African Society 1652–1840*, edited by Richards Elphick and Herman Gilliomee, 2nd edn, 109–183. Cape Town: Longman, 1989.
16. Another Christian Free Black acquaintance of Nicolaas's was Jacobus Hendriksz, from whom he borrowed the sum of 5 Rds.
17. Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, 41–51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; Robert Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652–1838*, 76. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994.
18. Cornelis Joannes Simonsz was Governor of Ceylon from 11 May 1703 to 22 November 1707. Prior to this appointment, Simonsz was Independent Fiscal at the Cape between 1690 and 1694. On his return to Europe in 1708, the Governor-General and Council of the Indies instructed him to act as commissioner to review "the situation at the Cape". See Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company*, 168, fn. 113. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
19. Nigel Worden, "New Approaches to VOC History in South Africa," *South African Historical Journal* 59, no. 1 (2007): 10.
20. An interesting variant is found in a letter from Simon de Mel. He produced the only literary embellishment in the entire corpus, when he compared Nicolaas's family to a "parched crop deprived of the sight of rain clouds" (Letter 70).
21. For a photograph and transcription of the IOU see Herman Tiekens, *Between Colombo and the Cape*, 36.