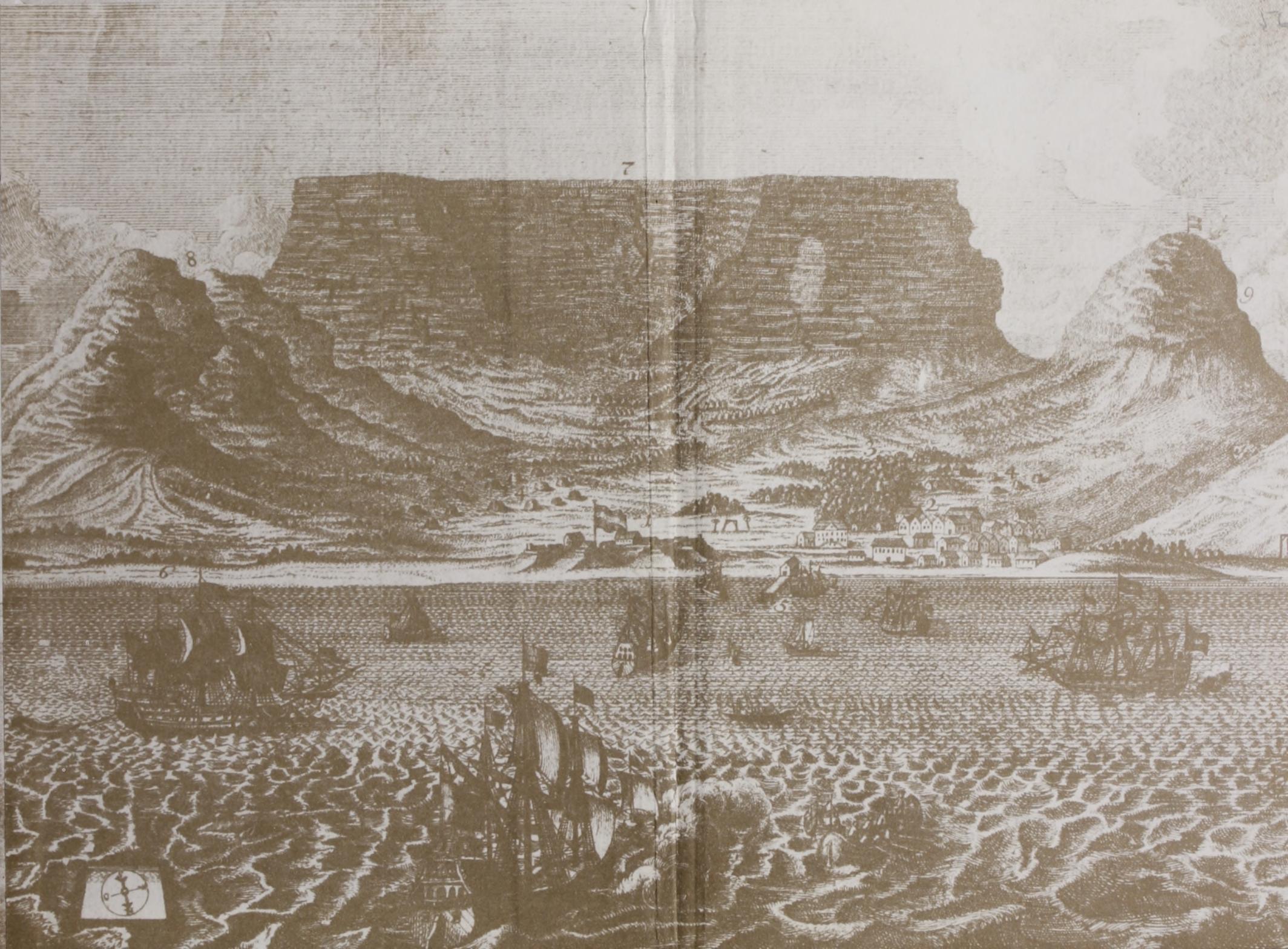


**The Cape of
Good Hope and
foreign contacts
1735-1755**

Maurice Boucher







Admiral Edward Boscawen, c. 1755. Oil painting by Joshua Reynolds in the National Portrait Gallery, London

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Preface

This is a picture of the Cape of Good Hope in the middle years of its history as a small segment of the Dutch East India Company's vast trading empire. It makes no attempt to tell the whole story of the years 1735-1755 and looks only in passing at such internal events as the expansion of the frontier, clashes between settlers and the indigenous Khoisan, and the emergent economic and social pattern of a colonial society. It sees the Cape rather in what was then regarded as its major rôle: a welcome port of call for passing ships, providing needed supplies for long and arduous voyages and refreshment and relaxation for seafarers. And in this the emphasis is not upon the Dutch themselves, but upon the foreigners from east and west with whom they came into contact and who gave the township on Table Bay - the future city of Cape Town - a cosmopolitan and international atmosphere it has never lost. The timbers of these wooden ships have long since rotted and the men who sailed in them are no more. But the Cape sea route remains as important today as it was in the era of the great national trading monopolies which brought the riches of the east to the homes and tables of the west and in turn profoundly influenced the Asian societies with which they came into contact.

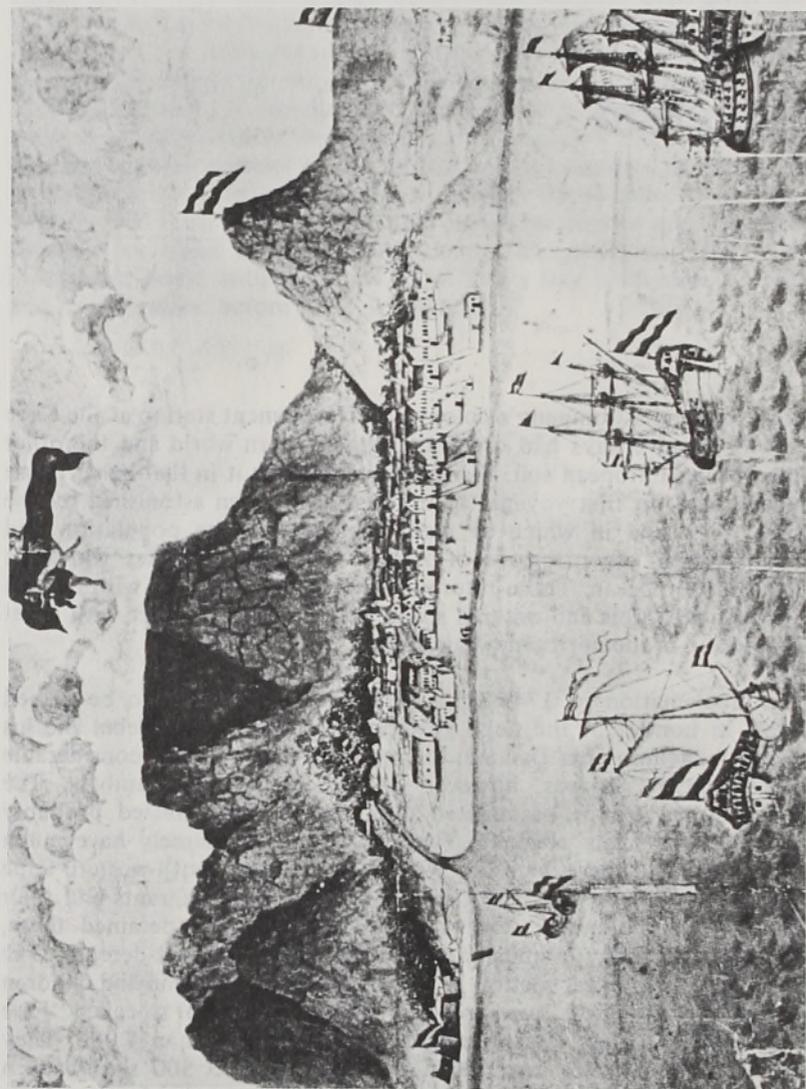
I am greatly in the debt of archivists and librarians in many lands for their generous assistance in helping me to prepare this picture of the Cape and its shipping in the 18th century. I also take the opportunity of offering my sincere thanks to the University of South Africa for providing me with the leave facilities and travelling expenses which made it possible for me to carry out extensive research in Europe and to the Human Sciences Research Council for financial assistance in completing my study of the relevant South African material. It should be added that the views expressed in these pages are my own and do not reflect those of any sponsoring body.

The text requires no special elucidation. The spelling of Christian names has generally been modernized in order to bring a degree of uniformity to the great variety of the period, even among people of the same nationality. Ships, which loom large in these pages, have normally been given the names they bear in the documents of the times: *Leijden* for *Leiden*, for example, and *Kiøbenhavn* for *København*. The variations in the contemporary spelling of Danmark (Denmark) in the names of ships have been arbitrarily simplified by choosing the not uncommon form "Dannemark" and using it in all cases, as in *Kongen af Dannemark*, *Dronningen af Dannemark* and so on. Quotations reflect the idiosyncracies of the writers and the standard of the age. In order to maintain consistency all dates are given in the so-called "New Style" and dates before September 1752 in such British sources as ships' logs have been adjusted to reflect the Gregorian Calendar which did not come into use in the British world until that time. New Year's Day is taken as 1 January and not, as in England before 1752, 25 March.

Introduction

The Dutch East India Company's colony and refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope had always had one foot in the eastern world and the other firmly planted on European soil. Visitors certainly saw it in that light. Those who landed there on first voyages to the east were often astonished by the strangeness of a land in which so many elements in the population had obvious links with other regions of Africa and with countries which lie beyond the Indian Ocean. Those returning looked on the Cape, with its neat houses, cultivated farms and ordered social life, as a first contact with a yet distant homeland in the northern hemisphere.

After the proclamation in 1745 of a vast new district soon to be named Swellendam in honour of the Cape governor Hendrik Swellengrebel and his lady Helena Wilhelmina ten Damme, the settlement was one of considerable geographical extent. It was, however, a small society in numbers. The indigenous Khoisan groups, bastardized and culturally dispossessed, probably formed the largest single element. Their numbers can scarcely have much exceeded 10 000 and there were few Khoi indeed in the south-western Cape by mid-century. For the rest, the Cape was a land of immigrants and their descendants, some voluntary settlers and others forcibly detained there, together with a company establishment for administration and defence. The burghers formed the largest section in 1745. These men, women and children of European birth or origin, augmented by a small number of so-called "Free Blacks", chiefly of Asian descent, numbered rather more than 4 000. They were served, if their needs required it, by upwards of 3 500 slaves and a handful of company servants loaned as farm overseers and schoolteachers. The Dutch East India Company's resident staff of some 1 100 men were mostly time-serving personnel, regularly renewed as occasion demanded



Steenhoven and other Dutch ships in Table Bay, 1738 or earlier. Water-colour by unknown artist in the Africana Museum, Johannesburg

and sometimes increased for defence purposes. In addition, the company and its employees owned about 550 slaves and there were also upwards of 150 convicts and political exiles from the east in the colony, the former swelling the ranks of the slave labour force and the latter living in isolation from the community. At this mid-point in our twenty year survey of foreign contacts, the total population under company jurisdiction in the entire colony did not exceed 9 500, the size of a modest European country town of the period such as Worcester in England.

Natural increase since the Dutch occupation of 1652 had led to a large Cape-born population, both free and slave. Swellengrebel, who became governor in 1739, was himself a Cape colonial by birth, as was his wife. The term "Afrikaander" was coming into use in the early 18th century, but it would seem to have denoted white colonists in general, irrespective of birthplace, to distinguish them from company employees. Among the settlers of European origin, the Dutch were dominant, but there were many who had been born elsewhere or were of non-Dutch parentage. The assisted immigration which had brought so many French-speaking refugees to the Cape in the late 17th century ceased in 1717 and thereafter most newcomers among the adult White burgher population were former company employees who obtained their freedom at the Cape.

By 1750 there were few of the original French settlers still alive and the language was only spoken by recent arrivals and by older people. One of the last survivors of the earlier French immigrants was Jean le Roux of Normandy, who died in 1752 after a successful farming career in the Stellenbosch district. There were burghers from several other European countries outside the United Provinces and British colonial America was also represented. Jan de Wit (John White) of New York, for example, was well known to British visitors at the Cape. It was, however, the Scandinavians and particularly the Germans who figured prominently in the small aristocracy of wealth and social position. They included in the years 1735 to 1755 such men as Andreas Grové of Viborg in Denmark, the Swedes Daniel Pfeil of Karlskrona and Matteus Bergstedt of Stockholm, and the Germans Johann Lorenz Bestbier from the Palatinate, Heinrich Ludwig Blättermann of Sondershausen, Henning Joachim Prehn of Hamburg, Jacob von Reenen and Martin Melck from Memel (Klaipeda), and Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Bötticher of Kappel in Hanover.

There was a still greater variety of national origins among the company's employees, with a heavy preponderance of Scandinavians and Germans, the latter at all levels of the administration. The Dutch East India Company was finding it increasingly difficult to recruit Dutch citizens, especially for the military branch, and Germans were taken on in large numbers. Izak Meinertzhagen of Cologne, appointed to lead the Cape troops in 1745, and Rudolph Siegfried Alleman of Westphalia, captain of the garrison,

commanded many junior officers and lower ranks of German birth. In the administrative grades were the Germans Joachim Nikolaus von Dessin of Rostock, under-merchant, bibliophile and son of an army officer in the Swedish service, Otto Lüder Hemmy of Bremen, future deputy governor, and the secretaries to the council of justice, Daniel Godfried Carnspeck from Pomerania and Johann Friedrich Tiemmendorf of Hamburg. The clerk Otto Friedrich Mentzel, who has left us so detailed a picture of Cape life from 1733 to 1741, came from Berlin.

The origins of the foreign-born slaves and those who obtained a freedom which placed them nominally on an equality with the White burghers were even more diverse. Malagasys predominated in the company's books, but slaves were also brought from more distant lands for both company and burghers: from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the Indian sub-continent, Indonesia and other parts of south Asia. All these regions were represented among the freemen of non-European background, together with the Chinese Empire, which contributed its quota to the kaleidoscopic Cape. Convicts, often from the Far East, frequently settled as freemen on the expiry of their sentences, competing for labour on unequal terms with poor Whites, to the indignation of the council of policy in 1749. There were in addition a number of political exiles, some of them disaffected princes of Indonesian sultanates. The many languages spoken by the newcomers by compulsion led to the widespread use of creolized Portuguese and Bazar Malay to facilitate communication. Whites in the administration were often fluent in one or both of these forms of speech.

It was in the port settlement in Table Valley, nestling close to the Castle between the mountains and the bay, that the diversity of peoples in the colony made its impact upon visiting strangers. The township, referred to by its modern name Cape Town by William Steevens of the London East Indiaman *Delawar* on his return from China in March 1750, turned its eyes to the sea and the ships which sailed the wide oceans. Table Bay, and for Dutch vessels in the winter months after 1741, Simons Bay, were often crowded with shipping and the Cape township was geared to provide for the needs of captains and crews. For those who went ashore, the port afforded facilities at all levels: the provisioning and repair of ships, board and lodging, medical care, relaxation in congenial surroundings and the opportunity to conduct a profitable private trade, sometimes, as with Captain Jan de Jong of the Dutch East Indiaman *Tolsduijn* in 1747, against company orders.

On the one hand the township offered the refinements of cultivated society and even a seat at the governor's table; on the other it had its rougher side: the slave lodge, a brothel in all but name, and a wide selection of cheap eating-houses, bars and sloop shops. The bars were often the scenes of considerable disturbance, to the disgust of sober citizens. One indeed, kept

by the burgher Coenraad Hinke, was censured in 1748. Its owner was stripped of his privileges and shipped off to the Indies as a sailor for sheltering deserters. Another, the "Schotse Tempel", once the home of an Aberdonian, Jacob Thomson, was kept jointly for some years by the burgher François Hendrik Mark and the Bengali "Free Black" Cornelis. Many a sailor too must have emptied his pockets before leaving in the appropriately named tavern, " 't Laatste Stuiverje".

The township in Table Valley was the seat of the colonial government, the temporary abode of a host of company officials, artisans, soldiers and sailors, and the place of confinement of most of the administration's slaves and some of the convicts. Perhaps one in five of the White burghers of the colony had their homes there, as did most of the "Free Blacks". Town dwellers were not slave owners on the grand scale, but many households possessed at least one. The total population would seem to have been about 2 500 in 1745, little more than that of an overgrown village in Europe.

It is interesting to compare the size of the township with the numbers aboard visiting ships in the period 1735 to 1755, when Table Bay and the Simons Bay roadstead on False Bay had an average of about 74 annual callers. It should be remembered in this connection that the Table Bay anchorage in particular was often crowded with shipping. Rather more than three-quarters of the visitors at this time were Dutch and the outward-bound Indiamen of that nation were usually heavily manned. The *Voorsigtigheid* of Delft, for example, had a crew of 281 when she sailed in 1744. Danish ships averaged about 140 men, the complement of the *Kjøbenhavn* on her visit in 1748, and French East Indiamen frequently carried 200 men and more, the average approaching the 180 aboard the *Montaran* in 1749. French vessels were required to carry a large number of officers in training. British ships, much the most regular foreign visitors, were smaller, although the 499 tons at which so many of them were registered was an arbitrary estimate designed to circumvent the regulation which stipulated that larger vessels had to carry a chaplain. Ships of this size, like the *Ilchester* of 1746, were customarily manned by 99 men and a boy. The warships and privateers seen at the Cape in these years often had much larger crews than merchantmen.

Long voyages were carefully planned to take maximum advantage of the seasonal changes in wind direction, with special reference to the monsoons of the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The south-west monsoon assisted outward voyages between April and October in those regions; homeward-bound ships made use of the north-east monsoon during the remainder of the year. The heaviest concentration of Indiamen was therefore to be found at the Cape between late December and early May. Dutch return fleets used to assemble there for the onward voyage and there were times when the total number of men on ships at anchor approached and even exceeded the population of the port settlement.

The years 1735 to 1755 are of considerable interest in the history of foreign contacts with the Cape of Good Hope. They witnessed in the first instance the growing maritime strength of Great Britain, the outbreak of her war with Spain in 1739 - the so-called War of Jenkins' Ear - and its extension in 1744 to a conflict with France during the War of the Austrian Succession. After the end of hostilities in 1748, Britain and France began to consolidate their respective positions in India for the almost inevitable resumption of fighting between them in the Seven Years' War of 1756-1763. In this period of international rivalry the equivocal rôle of the Dutch, and therefore of the Cape administration, played its part. The war at sea did not pass the colony by and its defence became a major consideration.

Conflict between the powers was little to the liking of officials in the pay of the commercial companies operating in Asia, whose network of private trading arrangements cut across national antipathies. The great companies, however, remained jealous of their privileges and these years are remarkable for the absence at the Cape of the ships of unwanted competitors, although such rivals were not absent from the carrying trade.

This hostility to outsiders was long shown to the ships of the reconstituted Danish Asiatic Company of 1732 trading to China, although Danish East Indiamen on the India run were not affected. A change in the Dutch attitude was brought about by an event in 1744 and its sequel, to which we shall refer in the following chapter. Vessels of the Swedish East India Company of 1731 regularly rounded the Cape, but it was not until 1759, when the *Prins Karl* and *Prinssessan Sophia Albertina* anchored in Table Bay on their return from China, that Swedish ships began to call at the settlement. Perhaps the unidentified vessel flying what the look-out thought to be a Scottish flag, which failed to make port against an adverse wind in September 1738, was a Swedish ship in difficulties. The Dutch had been antagonistic to Swedish competitors from the start, as is evident when some men from *Drottningen Ulrica Eleonora*, formerly the London East Indiaman *Heathcote*, touched at the Cape in 1753. They had been arrested for unauthorized entry at Cochin on the Malabar coast and sent to Batavia (Jakarta) for return to Europe. The group included several Britishers, among them the third mate Thomas Ouchterlony of Dundee.

It was the arrival early in 1755 of the *Prinz von Preuszen*, bound for Emden from China in the service of a new and short-lived Prussian Asiatic Company, which marked the first breach in exclusiveness, a breach which was to widen considerably later in the century. The Cape authorities gave Captain Groenewee a very cool reception. From April 1734 until that date foreign visitors, with a single exception, had been British, Danish and French, and very seldom was their business suspect. The one exception caused no anxiety. It was a small Portuguese ship, the *São João Baptista*, commanded by José da

Costa, which had been blown off course on a voyage from Brazil to Angola in 1735. Many perfectly acceptable ships rounded the Cape in both directions without calling, a few Portuguese vessels included, although Portugal's eastern empire had long been in sad decline.

The reason for hostility to new competitors was that they were rightly considered to be under the direction of international consortiums which made them less than genuine national companies. Moreover, their merchants, captains and crews were often foreigners who put the expertise they had acquired with the older established companies to the service of the newcomers, concentrating their efforts on the lucrative trade with China. This was particularly true of the Swedes and the Prussians; less so of the reconstituted Danish company. To compound the fault, the new companies were the heirs, in capital and personnel, of another international venture which had been suppressed at the insistence of British, French and Dutch trading interests: the East India Company of the Austrian Netherlands (Belgium), chartered in 1722. This "Ostend Company" had been preceded by a number of independent voyages from that port after 1715, trading with merchants from Mokha to Canton and setting up factories on the Coromandel coast and in Bengal. The company into which these ventures were amalgamated had a short life as an active competitor, although it lingered on until 1774. Its trade was suspended in 1727 and four years later, in return for a political *quid pro quo*, Karl VI of Austria made the suspension permanent. Two ships were permitted to sail to the east to wind up the company's affairs, one of which, the *Concordia*, commanded by Jacob Larmes, anchored in Table Bay in March 1734 on her return voyage to Ostend from Bengal. The company's factories became Austrian colonial appendages until the imperial flag was lowered over the last of them, that on the Coromandel coast, in 1752.

Ostenders visited the Cape between 1716 and 1719, but met with growing opposition from the local authorities. The departure in 1719 of one of these vessels, the *Charles VI*, was to link a Cape settler with the wider world of international rivalries in the east. The ship sailed with a burgher, Frederik Meijer, his wife Cornelia Rosendaal and their daughter Anna Cornelia, leaving behind another daughter, Catharina Elizabeth and her husband Amos Lambrechts. Burghers were not allowed to leave the colony without permission and this unauthorized embarkation, reputedly the first of its kind at the Cape, caused a considerable stir and resulted in the sale of the family possessions and the confiscation by the company of the proceeds. Dissatisfaction with life in the settlement and a desire to further Anna Cornelia's prospects underlay the decision to emigrate and Cornelia Rosendaal seems to have taken the lead in the affair. Anna Cornelia married the Flemish second in command of the ship, Marie-François de Schonamille, scion of a family of Sicilian origin, and a son François-Corneille was born to them and

baptized at the French settlement of Pondicherry on the Coromandel coast in 1721. His father, who became a friend of the future French governor general in the Indies, Joseph-François Dupleix, maintained the imperial presence after 1731 as governor of Banquibazar in Bengal and married François-Corneille into the Dupleix family circle. The young man's grandmother, Cornelia Rosendaal, died in Calcutta towards the beginning of 1746, leaving an inheritance to him and to his Cape cousin Hugo, son of Amos Lambrechts. On hearing the good news, Hugo made immediate application for the restitution of the cash value of his grandparents' goods, but it was not until 1757 that he learned that the Dutch company had finally decided in his favour.

The years 1735-1755 were certainly not without incident in the domestic history of the Cape and a number of aspects may be seen through the eyes of foreign visitors, sometimes, as with money values and the cost and supply of provisions, from a personal angle. The period covers the entire governorship of Swellengrebel from 1739 to 1751 and the first years of a continuing family compact in government under his successor and brother-in-law Rijk Tulbagh. Moreover, the existence of warring factions at the Cape in the years preceding Swellengrebel's appointment did not pass unnoticed by callers. There are also pertinent comments on the attitude of officials to their foreign guests, as well as to administrative shortcomings. Slavery was accepted as a natural condition of life and we find few references to the institution or to the presence of the indigenous Khoisan. In religious matters, the Dutch Reformed Church remained intolerant of other creeds. Lutherans sought freedom of worship in vain, although it was granted to them in Batavia. They and, clandestinely, the Catholics, had to rely on the infrequent ministrations of passing chaplains and priests. Anglican services, however, were held in the Dutch church on occasion for the benefit of visiting Englishmen. Missionary endeavour was limited and the Reformed Church looked unfavourably on the labours of the German Moravian Georg Schmidt among the Khoikhoi from 1737 until 1744. On the other hand, the strictures of the visiting governor general, Gustaaf Willem van Imhoff, in 1743 on the lack of piety among settlers in the interior led to the founding of new Dutch Reformed congregations at Swartland (Malmesbury) and Roodezand (Tulbagh) to supplement those already in being at the Cape, Stellenbosch and Drakenstein (Paarl).

We also gain further insight from foreign visitors into the desire of many burghers for free trade and the importance to them of commercial relations of all kinds with those on passing ships. Burgher participation in the economic life of the Cape was closely controlled, but Batavian citizens enjoyed much greater freedom. The close of the War of the Austrian Succession saw renewed demands at the Cape for independent burgher trade, supported by new economic trends in the United Provinces. Nothing, however, came of them at

that time. Dissatisfaction in this field was understandable, although pressures for political and economic change were perhaps relieved by the dispersion of burghers as the frontier advanced. Nevertheless, this was a period of unrest and, briefly in 1739, of open insurrection. A step in the direction of greater burgher involvement in the Cape economy was taken in 1743, when a chartered company was formed to exploit anticipated gold and silver deposits. Olof de Wet, son of a Swedish mother, was chairman of the board and an active promoter of the scheme. Shareholders included Bestbier and another German burgher, Johann Heinrich Hop from Hanover. The expectations raised by the prospector and self-proclaimed mining expert, Franz Dietrich Müller of Worms, were not, however, fulfilled and operations were abandoned in 1748.

There was a decline in the number of ships calling at the Cape in the years 1735-1755, compared with the total for the previous twenty years following the close of the War of the Spanish Succession. The difference amounted to some ten ships per year. The percentage of Dutch vessels to foreigners also dropped somewhat, although still forming an overwhelming majority, befitting a nation whose home port it was and whose eastern empire was still the greatest among those of the nations of Europe. The decline, however, was a first hint of things to come. Danish ships, about 11% of all foreign visitors in our period, showed a slight proportional increase, to be accounted for in part by the tardy acceptance at the Cape of those on the China run. French shipping represented about 15% of the foreign total, a marked rise despite the avoidance of the Cape by merchantmen during the Anglo-French war and the development of bases in the Mascarenes. The increase gives some indication of the faster tempo of French commercial and political activity beyond the Cape of Good Hope. Almost three-quarters of the foreign callers were British in these years, but this proportion represented a slight drop and the nature of the callers shows some interesting changes. Gone were the independent merchantmen; all those in Table Bay now flew the flag of the East India Company of London. There were, however, far more ships of war in the roadstead, a reflection of the struggle with France. The London company's refreshment station at St Helena had its drawbacks and was in any case less valuable as a port of call than the Cape for outward-bound ships as the island lay to the east of the normal recognized route in the middle of the south-east trade wind belt, of advantage only on homeward voyages.

The standard routes for all vessels engaged in the European trade with the Indies and China varied little. For entry into the North Atlantic, Scandinavians from the Sound generally favoured the northern passage round Scotland. This route, *achter om* in the Dutch phrase, was often used by East Indiamen from the United Provinces, especially in wartime, although they also took the Channel route of the London company's ships. French and Portuguese vessels from Lorient and Lisbon had immediate access to the

Atlantic Ocean. A course was generally set for the Canaries and the Cape Verde Islands - a popular port of call - and East Indiamen then sailed to the south-west towards the South Atlantic island of Trinidad (Trindade) and sometimes as far as the Abrolhos reef off the Brazilian coast. A change of course to the south-east was made in the southern tropics and at length ships found themselves in the belt of prevailing westerlies. From the Cape these westerlies - the famous roaring forties - could be used as far as the islands of Amsterdam and St Paul by ships taking the passage through the Sunda Strait to Batavia and the South China Sea, or by those which followed a more easterly route through the Indonesian archipelago. Some ships for the Coromandel coast or the Bay of Bengal also made use of the roaring forties, but the more usual routes to Arabia, India and Ceylon involved a change of course to the north-east after leaving southern Africa. Ships sometimes took the inner passage between Madagascar and the mainland in winter months, but more frequently made use of the middle and outer passages to the west or the east of the Mascarenes. Return voyages to the Cape across the Indian Ocean were usually more direct, with ships passing to the south of Madagascar. Ships then normally set course for Europe by way of St Helena, Ascension and the Azores, those returning to ports in northern latitudes sailing by way of the Channel or round Scotland as circumstances demanded.

There were nevertheless many deviations from these routes and calls in unusual places: in Norwegian ports by the Danes, home waters to ships of the Kingdom of Denmark and Norway; in Irish harbours and English roadsteads by the Dutch; at Cadiz to load bullion by the French East Indiamen; at Lisbon by the British; in Brazil and on the coasts and islands of the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans by many vessels. Portuguese ships made regular use of Bahia in Brazil on return voyages from India, French East Indiamen sometimes visited Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island and London ships put into Newfoundland harbours on occasion.

Outward-bound East Indiamen carried considerable quantities of coin and bullion for the purchase of commodities, together with a variety of European sale goods, including manufactured woollens, iron and lead. The return cargoes unloaded in the Thames indicate something of the range of eastern products brought to Europe from the east: tea, silks, porcelain and drugs from China; cottons, silks and saltpetre from India; pepper from the Malabar coast and Indonesia; coffee from Mokha.

The slave-trade between Madagascar and the Americas, which frequently touched the Cape in the earlier years of the 18th century, had virtually come to an end by May 1730 as far as the Dutch settlement was concerned, when Francis Williams took the *Rudge* galley out of Table Bay on a voyage to the River Plate. One such voyage remains to be discussed, but for the rest, the trade in slaves which affected the Cape between 1735 and 1755 was carried

out to supply a labour force for company settlements of various nations from St Helena to Indonesia, the Dutch colony at the southern tip of Africa included.

Piracy was a diminishing threat as the century advanced. Barbary corsairs operating off the north-west coast of Africa remained a potential danger and passports were carried by merchantmen as some guarantee of immunity. Maratha pirates infested the Arabian Sea until 1756, when a British punitive expedition destroyed their fleet and captured the chief stronghold, Gheriah. The former threat by European pirates operating from Madagascar was by 1735 a thing of the past. They had had a field day before being driven off to other climes, taking the London East Indiaman *Cassandra* in 1720, the Portuguese ship *Nossa Senhora do Cabo* in the following year and successfully attacking the Cape's Delagoa Bay outpost of those days in April 1722. It was the spirited, but unavailing resistance of the *Cassandra's* commander, the Scotsman James Macrae, which earned him the governorship of Madras, a fortune and retirement to an estate in his native land. His home, Orangefield House, was destined to achieve special status in a new age of international travel as the original terminal building and control tower for Scotland's Prestwick airport.

The early defence of Britain's trade against piracy in the Indian Ocean was entrusted to a naval squadron under the command of the choleric and indecisive Commodore Thomas Mathews. It reached the Cape in 1721, but the cruise added no glorious page to the annals of the Royal Navy and the London East India Company prayed that Mathews would never again be sent out to serve in eastern waters. Naval action was on a much greater scale in the years after 1739. Well-armed East Indiamen, miniature ships of the line themselves, assisted naval craft and privateers, and the Anglo-French conflict of 1744 brought considerable forces into the Indian Ocean.

General navigation in this period presented age-old challenges and experience counted for much in a day of imperfect charts and instruments. Ships' logs are full of details of land sightings, an important check on navigation when precise positions could not be accurately determined by other means. John Hadley's double-reflection quadrant of 1731 marked a more scientific approach to the correct measurement of longitude, but further advances were the work of the second half of the century. Errors of judgement in making a landfall were not infrequent and led to such disasters as the loss of the Dutch East Indiaman the *Visch* while attempting an unauthorized entry into Table Bay by night in 1740.

Although the great majority of voyages were accomplished without incident, there were many disasters along the sea routes linking Europe and the Far East. Cyclones in the Indian Ocean were greatly feared and several ships

limped into port at the Cape in a deplorable state, sometimes so badly battered that they could never put to sea again. There were some incredible escapes from disaster. The outward-bound Enkhuizen East Indiaman *Petronella Alida* was holed in the Cape Verde Islands in 1737, but a stone which lodged in her damaged keel enabled her to reach the Cape in safety. She was, however, condemned as unseaworthy at Saldanha Bay in 1739. Shipwrecks occurred all too often in Cape waters. The great storm of 1722 in Table Bay, which destroyed the ten ships then at anchor, including the London East Indiamen *Addison*, *Nightingale* and *Chandos*, was followed by others in 1728 and 1737 which wrecked more Dutch vessels. The second disaster saw the loss of the homeward-bound East Indiamen *Ipenrode*, *Flora*, *Paddenburg*, *Westerwijk*, *Goudriaan*, *Buijs*, *Duijnbeek* and *Roodenrijs*, as well as the locally-based brigantine, the *Victoria*. Another Cape fatality was the loss of the *Reijgersdaal*, outward-bound, in October 1747. Losses caused by storms in Table Bay led to the use of False Bay as a winter anchorage for Dutch ships and also to the abortive attempt to provide shelter behind a protective breakwater.

Improvements in ship construction in the interests of greater safety and efficiency date mainly from the later 18th century. Indian teak began to replace oak and copper sheathing also helped to protect East Indiamen from the ravages of the teredo worm in tropical waters. The straight-sided ship was introduced, eliminating the "tumble-down" topside and giving greater security to the masts in a wider spread of the shrouds. Design long continued to incorporate the dangerous waist, always liable to ship heavy seas, but the *Boscawen* of the London company, built at Blackwall on the Thames in 1748, was a pioneer among flush-decked vessels. Advances in rig, making ships easier to handle and more readily answerable to the helm, continued throughout the century. By 1750 topgallant sails were being carried on all three masts of East Indiamen and the cumbersome lateen was being replaced on the mizen-mast by the more manageable spanker. British methods of construction had their influence in the United Provinces and one Dutch East Indiaman, the *Prinses van Oranje*, named for the wife of the stadtholder, Willem IV, was built on the Thames in 1747. A contributory cause of unseaworthiness on Dutch return ships was considered to be the excessive load of ill-distributed additional cargo taken aboard in the east as private trade.

Shipwreck was only one hazard among many on East India voyages. Fire and explosion also took their toll. This was the fate of more than one Dutch East Indiaman, including the homeward-bound *Hilversbeek*, which blew up in the Azores in June 1741. Fire reaching the powder-room could have disastrous consequences.

Few voyages were unaccompanied by sickness and death aboard. Even sea-

sickness could lead to acute despair. A soldier on the Zeeland return ship *Westcapelle*, at the Cape in 1735, gave this as the reason for his attempted suicide. Accidents aloft and drownings were not uncommon, but it was the effects of long months at sea with diminishing supplies of water and provisions which caused the greatest losses. Protracted voyages were not always the result of the adverse weather conditions alone. There were often long delays in port and some ships were even taken off their normal route to enable the captain to negotiate private trade of his own. Calms and contrary winds could cause disasters of large proportions. The Dutch ship *Diemermeer*, returning from Ceylon without a Cape call, was becalmed off the Guinea coast in 1747, losing all but nine of her crew. Her hempen cable eventually parted and she ran on shore where she was pillaged and burnt by villagers. There were only two survivors. Another Dutch East Indiaman, the *Casteel van Woerden*, drifted round the Arabian Sea for fifteen months before reaching her final destination, Colombo, late in 1744. Some 250 men died aboard this prototype of the legendary "Flying Dutchman".

Although officers and passengers lived in reasonable comfort aboard ship, except in extraordinary circumstances, life afloat was by no means as pleasant for the crews. Efforts were made to keep the lower decks clean, but vermin abounded. Crowded and insanitary conditions encouraged the spread of disease and medical attention was rough and ready. Ship fever was common, respiratory complaints and dysentery were widespread and dietary deficiency led to scurvy. Ships often carried the very products which alone could prevent scorbatic diseases, but it was not until the later 18th century that their certain preventive properties were recognized. Meanwhile, hundreds died unnecessarily and the death rate was often staggeringly high, even on voyages of moderate length. It was, however, realized that men brought on shore in an advanced state of sickness frequently recovered with remarkable speed. For many, therefore, the Cape anchorage provided a reprieve from an otherwise inevitable fate.

We have taken a general look at the Cape and the shipping which passed round it. We now view more closely the foreigners who visited the Dutch East India Company's southern African refreshment station. Here was a valuable port of call, not only for the sick, but also for those whose duty lay in ensuring the safety of ships and cargoes on long voyages to Europe or the east. We shall see something not only of these activities, but also of relations with those on shore, of shipboard discipline, of desertion and escape, of servitude and freedom, of trade and politics, and of human endeavour in peace and war.

1

The Danes at the Cape

Danish ships began to trade round the Cape of Good Hope after an East India Company had been chartered by Christian IV in 1616. Dutch merchants in Copenhagen had much to do with the scheme and in August 1618 a ship was sent out to Ceylon to prepare the way for commerce with that island. A fleet of merchantmen and naval vessels followed a few months later under the command of Ove Giedde and in July 1619 reached Table Bay with two French privateers captured in the Cape Verde Islands. Second in command of the military forces with the expedition was Erik Grubbe, who was accompanied by his wife. Soon after the ships dropped anchor she gave birth to a boy who was given the incongruous if appropriate name, Cabo de Bona Esperanza. This was perhaps the first White birth at the Cape, more than 30 years before the arrival of the Dutch to inaugurate permanent settlement. Sadly, however, both mother and son died before the fleet sailed on.

The Danes were unsuccessful in Ceylon, but in November 1620 they secured a foothold at Tranquebar on the Coromandel coast. This Indian trading outpost, protected by the Dansborg defences, became the hub of all Danish commerce in the Indies. Tranquebar also developed into a noted missionary centre after the arrival in July 1706 of the Germans Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau, ordained ministers of the Lutheran Church. When they visited the Cape on that initial voyage the two missionaries were disappointed to find little evidence of deep religious feeling among the Lutherans living there under Dutch rule.

The first Danish East India Company was a small-scale venture and was wound up in 1650. It was, however, reactivated under a new charter twenty years

Captain Michael Tønder of the *Prins Christian* 1731. Clay figure made in Canton in Handels- og Søfartsmuseet, Elsinore



Elsinore, Kronborg and the Sound, 1739. Gouache by J.J. Bruun in Handels- og Søfartsmuseet, Elsinore



later and made modest profits until the early years of the following century. Trading contacts were established to associate Tranquebar with Asian commerce from Mokha to China, although attempts to set up permanent factories on the Malabar coast, in Bengal and in Indonesia met with little success. Losses incurred after the resumption of war with Sweden in 1709 led to the liquidation of the company in 1729. Control in Tranquebar was vested as an interim measure in the crown and private interests not only took over the trade of the Indies, but also forged a direct link in 1730-1732 between Copenhagen and China. The voyage to Canton and back was undertaken by the man-of-war *Prins Christian*, a captured Swedish frigate. Her captain was the naval officer Michael Tønder, a maimed veteran of the Great Northern War, and trade negotiations were entrusted to a Dutch speaker, Pieter van Hurk, who had previously been to China in the service of the East India Company of the Austrian Netherlands and was later to become a director of a new Danish company trading in eastern waters.

It was at this point that the "Ostend Company" was forced to yield to international pressure and to leave the East India trade in the hands of the major monopolies. Flemish interests sought new outlets for their commerce and a plan was put forward in 1728 to trade from the then Danish port of Altona in northern Germany as a branch of the Copenhagen company. This scheme too had to be abandoned in the face of British, Dutch and French hostility. Scandinavia itself offered possibilities, as Pieter van Hurk discovered, and it was against this background of suspicion in London, Paris and the United Provinces that Denmark re-entered the world of national companies trading in the Far East with the chartering of an Asiatic Company by Christian VI on 12 April 1732. The enterprise was essentially a national one, although foreigners were associated with its commerce. Pieter van Hurk was one and another was the supercargo (merchant) John MacCulloch on the *Dronning Juliane Maria* which Svend Fenger brought to the Cape in 1755 on a voyage to China.

This extension of trading activities by the Asiatic Company across the South China Sea was a new departure. The old Danish East India Company had not been directly involved in the field, but trade with China had been a prime objective of the hated "Ostend Company". It is not to be wondered at that the Dutch took a jaundiced view of Pieter van Hurk's connection with the pilot venture which preceded the creation of the chartered company of 1732. The *Prins Christian* had been received civilly enough at the Cape on her return voyage in March of that year, but in the following November the colonial government was instructed to refuse supplies of all kinds to Danish ships on voyages to and from China or any other regions with which Denmark had hitherto had no commercial relations. At the same time the ships of the new Swedish East India Company were placed under a complete embargo.

This then was the position in 1735. Regular China voyages by Danish vessels, destined to become the mainstay of the Asiatic Company's prosperity, had been initiated in the previous year, but from 1733 until 1744, when the ship *Kongen af Dannemark* put in an unexpected appearance, all Danish company vessels at the Cape were on the authorized Tranquebar run. It was not until mid-century that Danish East Indiamen in the China trade made use of Cape facilities with any regularity, a departure which indicates a change of attitude by the Dutch authorities.

The change was brought about by the *Kongen af Dannemark* affair. This ship, commanded by Philippus Jacobus Derdeijn, sailed from the Sound on the last day of December 1742, bound for Tranquebar and Canton. A 24 gun vessel with a crew of 140, she carried several supercargoes for the transaction of trade and a large quantity of coin for the purchase of tea, silks, porcelain and other goods from the Chinese merchants. Derdeijn had to anchor for several weeks in Norwegian waters before taking his ship into the Atlantic by the northerly route. He made for the Brazilian coast, but failing to round Cape Santo Agostinho, returned to Ireland to shelter in Kinsale Harbour from September 1743 until January 1744. There he provisioned ship and signed on additional crew. *Kongen af Dannemark* finally reached Table Bay via the Cape Verde Islands on 3 May 1744, more than sixteen months after leaving Denmark.

Derdeijn and his chief officers asked for food and water, but to their astonishment in view of the difficulties of the voyage and the international tradition of help for those in trouble, the independent fiscal, Pieter van Reede van Oudtshoorn, refused to entertain their request in terms of the governor's instructions to him. It is possible that Swellengrebel might have taken a different line had he been on the spot to assess the situation. He had, however, gone to Rondebosch to attend the sale of property belonging to his late father, Johannes Swellengrebel, and had taken with him the deputy governor, Rijk Tulbagh. The fiscal found means to isolate *Kongen af Dannemark*, preventing contact with the shore and with the Danish vessel *Docqven*, returning from India to Copenhagen under the captaincy of Peter Nielsen Roed. Even the Dutch post at Saldanha Bay was alerted, in case Derdeijn should slip out of harbour to seek shelter there.

Kongen af Dannemark's captain was obliged to admit defeat and on 9 May raised anchor to continue his voyage. Two weeks later, however, news reached the Castle that the Danish ship had run into a heavy storm off the Cape and had been forced to make for False Bay. She was badly damaged and in urgent need of help. The authorities thought at first that this might be a ruse, but a commission of inspection under Jacobus Möller, the marine superintendent, reported on 28 May that *Kongen af Dannemark* was indeed in bad shape. The Cape could not supply all her needs and in any case Dutch timbers did

not match the specifications of Danish vessels. Permission was granted for a Danish deputation to return to Europe on Dutch ships to discuss the situation with the directors in Copenhagen. The deputation, which included a second mate Christian Sommer, also carried a letter from the captain and supercargoes complaining bitterly about the treatment meted out by the Cape government to a ship already in poor condition, even before the fateful storm. The mate Sommer was to rise to captain's rank before his death off Tranquebar in July 1748 as commander of the *Kipbenhavn*.

There ensued a period of enforced idleness. A request for some of *Kongen af Danmark's* crew to be taken into the Dutch service was turned down, although a year later 27 sailors and a second mate were drafted to various ships of the Dutch return fleet, together with four compatriots left behind when Niels Hansen Gram's *Prinsesse Charlotta Amalia* sailed for home. Idleness breeds mischief and in September 1744 a sailor was clapped in irons for attacking James White, one of the crew taken on in Ireland. The rumour that the man was soon to be released elicited a letter of protest from Patrick Bourke and other English-speaking crew members. Should this be true, they wrote, "We make it our requests that you will send us ashore, for we fear if he be let loose that he will come at Night and Kill us in our hammacks (*sic*)".

The Danish company's decision concerning *Kongen af Danmark* reached the Cape in March 1745, when Reynert Jansen of the *Tranquebar* sailed into Table Bay from Copenhagen. *Kongen af Danmark* was to be legally declared unseaworthy and was to remain at anchor until the underwriters gave permission for her to be sold. Two months later Dirk Wolter van Nimwegen of the Dutch company's warship, the *Leijden*, brought disagreeable news of the affair. The Danish directors had been incensed by the complaints about the Cape authorities they had received from the deputation of the previous year. They had taken the matter up at the highest level and Christian VI had instructed his envoy in The Hague to protest to the states general. In his letter, passed on by the states general to the Dutch company, the Danish ambassador, Nils Griis, contrasted Dutch inhumanity at the Cape with the kindness shown shipwrecked sailors of that nation by the Danes in the Faroes. The protest had its effect, for in March 1745 it was decided that henceforth Danish ships on the China run would be given the freedom of the Cape anchorage. The Dutch company asked the Cape authorities to comment on the Danish charges. Swellengrebel and his council of policy disclaimed any knowledge of the state of the Danish ship when it first arrived and pointed out that in sending the Danes on their way they were only acting on orders. There were no further repercussions. The Dutch directors asked that every facility be afforded Danish vessels coming to the assistance of *Kongen af Danmark*, but warned that care should be taken to prevent *morshandel*, that illegal private trade against which the great monopolies fought an unrelenting and largely fruitless battle.

This was not the Danish king's first intervention in affairs at the Cape. A Danish missionary who visited the settlement in 1740 brought news to Christian VI of the disabilities under which Lutherans in the colony suffered. The king's request that Cape Lutherans be accorded freedom of worship was laid before the states general and the directors of the Dutch company in 1741. Christian VI's intervention led to the taking of a census of Lutherans at the Cape and aroused vain hopes among them of an imminent change in the religious dispensation at the settlement. The chaplain of *Kongen af Danmark*, Petrus Schouw, regularly conducted services while he was at the Cape, preaching in German. He must also have confirmed children of Lutheran parents in the faith. Swellengrebel, of Lutheran background, raised no objections to the chaplain's ministrations.

On 25 May 1745 Peter Nielsen Roed paid his last visit to the Cape, this time in command of *Dronningen af Danmark*, bound for Tranquebar and China. He took aboard the money chests and cargo carried by Derdeijn's vessel and embarked as many men as he could, leaving the captain and a skeleton crew to await the final disposal of *Kongen af Danmark*. The fate of Roed's ship is one of the many mysteries of the sea. She reached Canton, but after passing through the Sunda Strait on her return voyage, disappeared without trace in the Indian Ocean. Early in 1746 Rollof Kierulf brought the China ship *Christiansborg Slot* to the Cape with the official authorization for the sale of *Kongen af Danmark*, now riding on rotting cables and a potential danger to herself and to other shipping. The sale took place towards the end of April, while Kierulf's ship and Emanuel Sporing's *Kronprinsessen af Danmark*, bound for Tranquebar, were still in port. As a result, the Cape administration was able to buy the hull, useful for its wood, a small boat for service in False Bay, some cannon for the defences and a quantity of masts, spars and other accessories. *Kongen af Danmark*'s foremast was to help the Dutch ship *Haarlem* continue her voyage to Ceylon in 1749 and her rudder was fitted to the damaged *Hercules* from that island in the following year.

The visiting Danes sailed on, but there remained at the Cape the skeleton crew, presided over, in the best traditions of the sea, by their captain. Most were repatriated with the Dutch return fleet of 1746, Derdeijn and his officers travelling as gentlemen of leisure and the crew members working their passages. There is a reference in November 1747 to some Danes left at the Cape who had been rescued from vagrancy by signing on with the Dutch, but there is no indication that they were from Derdeijn's ship. Two men, however, stayed on at the Cape and became burghers: Peter Andreas Christian Wydeman of Copenhagen and David de Leeuw from Glückstadt in Holstein. The latter settled in Swellendam, although he was apparently not a productive asset to the new district. The way was now open for all Danish ships to touch at the Cape and the extended invitation was accepted by the future company director Jens Werner Aceleye of *Dronningen af Danmark* - a new ship of that name - when he called on 21 April 1749 on his voyage to China.

Although losses at sea among Danish East Indiamen were never excessively high, it is surprising how many of the fine ships mentioned in these pages ultimately met with disaster, some, like *Dronningen af Danmark*, vanishing without trace. The years 1749-1752 were particularly fateful. The *Kjøbenhavn* was lost with all hands off the Faroes at the end of December 1749 and the *Christiansborg Slot*, outward-bound for China under Lyder Ridder Holmann, ran aground in the Kattegat in December 1750. She managed to limp into the Swedish port of Gothenburg, but was found to be unseaworthy and had to be sold. Her first supercargo was Derdeijn's former purser, Marcus Christian Svendsen. *Docqven*, commanded by Niels Haagensen Due, called at the Cape in November 1750 on a voyage to Tranquebar, but disappeared on the homeward run in the following year. The captain and his son Haagen Nielsen perished with her. We learn from the log of the London East Indiaman *Essex* that *Docqven* had been in some danger at the Cape in February 1749 when she was returning to Copenhagen under the same captain. Fire broke out near the fo'c'sle, but the blaze was fortunately soon brought under control. *Kronprinsessen af Danmark*, then commanded by Svend Fenger, was one of two Danish ships lost on the southern Cape coast in the years 1750 and 1752.

The first of these disasters occurred to the East Indiaman *Elefanten*, whose captain, Andreas Evensen Grimsta, was evidently a brutal man and insensitive to the sufferings of others. The first mate too was hardly a popular figure. Nathanael Aars spent part of this particular voyage in custody for theft and ultimately came to assume the captain's heartless rôle. *Elefanten* had visited the Cape in 1748 under Jesper With's command, but she was a fairly new ship, built in England and well-found. She sailed from the Sound on her last voyage on 8 January 1749 and Grimsta brought her to the Cape for repairs to be carried out in False Bay in May and June of that year. Fever was rampant aboard on the further passage to Tranquebar, which was reached on 14 September. Some six weeks later *Elefanten* was despatched to Sumatra (Sumatera), returning to the Coromandel coast early in the next year. She sailed for home on 4 March 1750. The Indian Ocean crossing was long and arduous, with variable winds and heavy storms. Provisions and water ran short and there were many deaths and much sickness among the crew before the ship reached the mouth of the Gouritz River, west of Mossel Bay, on 5 August. The crew's only thought was to reach the shore and discipline completely broke down. On 8 August *Elefanten* was deliberately allowed to drift on to the rocks. Local farmers assisted in the rescue operations and the last three men were taken off on 16 August, not long before the vessel's timbers were finally shattered, strewing cargo along the beach.

The German-born landdrost of the Swellendam district, Johann Andreas Horak, came down to the shore to arrange for the accommodation with farmers in the vicinity of the 78 men saved. The colonists could not be persuaded to

guard the goods scattered on the beach and there were fears that they intended to steal what they could. It was, however, a sailor from *Elefanten* who picked up the chalice and paten used aboard in the communion service and also found a small chest containing miscellaneous wares. He sold his lot to a farmer, but the purchaser was traced with the help of the authorities and compelled to return the items without compensation.

The farmers soon tired of their unexpected guests and undertook to transport them overland, at a price, to the Cape. The journey took about three weeks and groups were despatched at intervals from early September. Grimsta reached the port settlement on 26 October 1750 and was well received by the governor. His crew were lodged on Dutch ships and complaints of ill-usage were stilled when Swellengrebel issued orders that the Danes were to be shown every courtesy. In November, Due's ship *Docqven* arrived on her voyage to Tranquebar. The captain was short of men and took a number of the shipwrecked sailors on board. They doubtless went down with that unfortunate vessel on her homeward passage. The Cape gained some settlers as a result of the wreck of *Elefanten*: Johan Christian Bresler and Johan David Groodschel of Copenhagen, and the surgeon in the Land van Waveren (Tulbagh), Nicolaj Fuchs of Rendsburg. Most, however, returned to Europe on Dutch ships and many men remained in the service of that country. Grimsta sailed on the *Hoop* and at length reached Copenhagen on 3 June 1751. An enquiry into the loss of his ship held on 6 October of that year apportioned no specific blame and a few weeks later the captain sailed again for Tranquebar on Michael Jacobsen Rønne's *Prinsesse Vilhelmine Caroline*. Grimsta died at Tranquebar in July 1756 and in our catalogue of Danish maritime disasters we may note that the vessel on which he sailed to India vanished between the Cape and St Helena in 1755 on her return voyage from China under the captaincy of Poul Kock.

Kronprinsessen af Danmark sailed from Copenhagen on her last voyage on 12 October 1750, reaching Tranquebar on 30 May of the following year. She lay at anchor for two weeks in Table Bay at the beginning of February, when Captain Fenger had the pleasure of attending a farewell banquet to the retiring governor, Swellengrebel, and also represented his company at the funeral of Governor Wake of Bombay, a ceremony to which we shall return in discussing British visitors. After loading calico and other goods at Tranquebar, Fenger sailed to the Malabar coast for pepper, where he narrowly escaped detection by a pirate fleet. *Kronprinsessen af Danmark* left Calicut on 4 February 1752 with two Portuguese stowaways aboard.

The crossing of the Indian Ocean was uneventful enough and was enlivened by a competition designed to clean the ship up. The reward of a tot of brandy was offered to any man who could collect 1 000 cockroaches. In little more than five weeks more than 38 000 of these omnivorous insects had been

caught. As the ship approached the African coast in mid-April the weather worsened and the crew had to man the pumps day and night. The vessel was in grave danger of sinking and the first mate Rasmus Munck expressed his fears in sombre verses inscribed in the log.

Kronprinsessen af Dannemark at last reached land near Mossel Bay on 24 May. Contact was made with farmers on shore and with the landdrost Horak, and it was decided early in June to enter the bay in order to winter there. By this time the crew were in a sorry state. There had been a number of deaths and many of the survivors were sick. The ship anchored on 9 June and provisions were brought by farmers to succour the needy. It soon became apparent that *Kronprinsessen af Dannemark* was in too bad a condition for repair and in July and August the cargo was brought ashore. Arrangements were made locally for the erection of shelters to store the goods and to house the crew. Two carpenters were sent from the Cape to inspect the ship and towards the end of August it became necessary to beach her. Information had been sent to Copenhagen about the disaster and in October most of the stranded Danes travelled overland to the Table Valley settlement in groups, leaving Fenger and 25 men to guard the stricken vessel and the cargo. The captain, however, had to visit the Cape for some weeks to make arrangements to pay the men and to discuss their repatriation. One problem arose over reimbursement for clothes purchased from the burgher Jan George Smal, who was among those who provided lodging for the Danes. Whilst awaiting repatriation some of the crew helped on the farms.

Those who had been sent to the settlement went back to Europe on the Dutch ships *Hercules*, *Slooten* and *Huijgewaard*, and on Rønne's *Prinsesse Vilhelmine Caroline*, returning early in 1753 from Tranquebar. Of those on the Dutch East Indiamen several absconded in Amsterdam, one was left behind when his ship called at Plymouth and another broke his leg and had to remain in Middelburg. Fenger and his men at Mossel Bay had a longer wait, enlivened on occasion by visits from the landdrost and his family. Many toasts were drunk when guests were present, each accompanied by a cannon shot: 36 on one day; 27 on another. At last a salvage expedition sent out from Copenhagen in ships loaned by the Danish West India and Guinea Company reached Simons Bay in mid-July 1753. These vessels were the frigate *Prins Christian*, under the command of Jørgen Maartensen Grønborg, and *Rigernes Ønske*, captained by Johan Christian Hove. Before these ships reached the scene of the wreck and after permission had been obtained, an auction of the hull and fittings of *Kronprinsessen af Dannemark* was held, to which farmers came from far and wide.

Rigernes Ønske sailed into Mossel Bay on 19 September 1753 and the *Prins Christian* on 6 October. Within two weeks the beached cargo had been taken aboard the rescue vessels and the captain and most of the remaining crew had

embarked for the voyage back to Copenhagen. The youngest mate, Michael Hansen Lindegaard, decided to see a little more of the country and travelled to the Cape overland. The West India Company ships spent a month at the Cape on their return journey, sailing for home on 7 December 1753 and a safe arrival in Denmark. While they lay at anchor in Table Bay, William Hutchinson brought the London East Indiaman *Godolphin* in from Bengkulu in the East Indies and was able to obtain a useful cable from the Danes, previously part of *Kronprinsessen af Danmark's* equipment.

Fenger's long stay at the Cape introduced him and his men to many burghers and the names of a few they met in the Mossel Bay region are recorded. These include Izak Meijer, from whom useful information was obtained in early June 1752, and a farmer Adam Barnard, who was of great assistance in the following month. The chief carpenter of Fenger's ship, Niels Hendriksen Gunter, and his assistant Christian Mortensen Marreboe figure in the Cape records in connection with a debt incurred while they were at Mossel Bay. As with earlier Danish disasters at the Cape, the Copenhagen company's loss was the settlement's gain in manpower. Two former soldiers of the Tranquebar garrison, Ole Pedersen and Ole Mortensen, elected to remain behind; so too did the cooper Sivert Jacobsen Wiid. To these may be added the future Cape burgher Rollof Fischer of Copenhagen, left at the Cape by the Danish East Indiaman *Prinsesse Louise*.

Most Danish ships, and indeed the majority of vessels from other countries, went quietly about their business on the high seas and their presence at the Cape is merely noted in the daily journal and in the official communications sent back by the government to the homeland or on to Batavia. We learn a little more from passing references to Danish visitors in the logs of other vessels at anchor in the roadstead. In late April 1747 John Lyon, chief mate on Benjamin Lowe's *Walpole* returning from Canton to the Thames, noted a strange ship in the offing between Green Point and Robben Island, "with an old tore Dans Jack at her Ensign staff". This was the now familiar *Kronprinsessen af Danmark* with Sporing in command, bound for Copenhagen. A British warship, the *York*, sailing for home from the Coromandel coast in January 1750, saw the same Danish East Indiaman in Table Bay, again under Sporing's captaincy, on another return voyage from Tranquebar. Naval personnel may be excused their ignorance of restrictions in the contemporary struggle to maintain monopoly trading rights and the *York's* log records: "A Sweeds Ship Anchor'd here". The Danes, far less frequent Cape callers than the British, sent letters to Europe on occasion with London East Indiamen. Augustus Townshend of the *Augusta* returning from China performed this service for Kierulf of the *Prinsesse Charlotta Amalia* in early May 1743. Both vessels left for home at about the same time, but the *Augusta* may have been a faster sailer and the duplication of letters as a precaution against loss was a common practice. The communication was to

be delivered to the Danish company's London agent, John Collet. Danish ships were also used by the Dutch to carry official letters. The *Tranquebar* carried mail of this kind to the Dutch factory at Nagappattinam on the Coromandel coast when she sailed in April 1745 from Table Bay.

East Indiamen regularly embarked a few passengers, among them officials serving in the factories and settlements of the Far East. Danish vessels were no exception. Early in 1734, for example, the *Wendela*, commanded by Jørgen Mathias Foss, touched at the Cape with the retiring royal governor of Tranquebar, the sea-captain Diderich Mühlenfort, aboard. Mühlenfort, who held that post during the years of the reconstruction of Danish East India trade, was a fluent Dutch speaker, as a financial transaction he recorded at the Cape indicates. In May 1747 the former second in command of the British settlement at Madras, William Monson, who was accompanied by a young writer with the London company, transferred in Table Bay from *Kronprinsessen af Dannemark* to the *Walpole* of his own nation. Monson's departure from India was in the aftermath of a British setback on the Coromandel coast to which we shall later turn our attention. A similar transfer took place in February of the following year when an Englishman William Desbordes, who had reached the Cape from Batavia on the Dutch vessel the *Hoop*, continued his voyage with the Danes on With's *Elefanten*. Three men left behind when *Elefanten* sailed worked their passage back to Europe on ships of the Dutch return fleet. When Caspar Fenger brought the *Tranquebar* to the Cape in March 1754 from Copenhagen, a passenger Johannes de Wet disembarked. He was no doubt Johannes Matthias, son of Johannes Carolus de Wet, no stranger to the Danes as we shall see.

Desertions from ships lying at anchor in the Cape roadstead were not infrequent and evasions and attempted evasions by sea of company servants and slaves became an increasingly serious problem in the 18th century, with heavy punishments for would-be escapees and for those who helped them. When Sporing brought *Kronprinsessen af Dannemark* to the Cape in 1747, four men deserted and nine others were lost when a boat from the ship capsized in Table Bay. The fatalities included the quartermaster Hans Hoff. Faced with a depleted crew, Sporing decided to release a sailor Christian Brun who had been arrested for threatening a quartermaster Christian Andersen. Trained men could not be allowed to remain idle in the stormy weather then prevailing. When *Kronprinsessen af Dannemark* had called outward-bound in the previous year three Dutch deserters and a Singhalese slave Alexander, the property of the German burgher surgeon at the Cape Johann Georg Hauptfleisch, had managed to escape on her. Alexander was taken to Tranquebar, where the governor, Hans Ernst Bonsack, determined to send him back again to the Dutch settlement. The slave, however, succeeded in making his escape once more and Hauptfleisch gave a power of attorney to Johannes Keijl in Batavia to handle the matter should Alexander be found

again. Sporing's ship was once more in the news early in 1750 on his last return voyage as her captain. He tried to take some shipwrecked sailors from the French East Indiaman the *Centaure* on board to work without wages, but his manning problems were solved when eleven Dutch deserters emerged from their hiding-places after *Kronprinsessen af Dannemark* had sailed.

The *Prinsesse Charlotta Amalia* left with three deserters from the settlement in 1743. One, Peter Jørgensen Brun, was from Christiansand in Norway and another, Jacobus Ruijgrok, was the Cape-born son of a Dutch carpenter Arnoud Ruijgrok. In the next year three garrison soldiers were found aboard *Docqven*, but they were returned to face a sentence of 18 months' imprisonment in chains. Another unsuccessful escape bid was made by three sailors in 1751, when Ackeleye's *Dronningen af Dannemark* lay in Simons Bay on her return from China. One of them was a Norwegian from Stavanger, Peter Rolfsen, who worked on the company's wharf. These men were more heavily punished, receiving a scourging and ten years' hard labour.

The Cape provided Danish ships with a considerable measure of assistance. Supplies of food and water were readily available, services of various kinds were offered, equipment could often be replaced and cash advances made. The smooth working of these arrangements depended on maintaining good relations with the governor and leading officials. To expedite matters at the Cape an efficient agency was established which co-ordinated the various requirements of visiting captains.

Gifts, judiciously apportioned according to rank and seniority, played a large part in securing the co-operation of the Cape administration. The governor and his deputy were never overlooked; the fiscal too had to be propitiated, as his friendly attitude could do much to smooth the way for the private trade which flourished between ship and shore, not always within permitted limits. Luxury goods from the east and special items of food and drink from Europe reached the homes of senior officials in this manner; slaves also made very acceptable presents and figure in the accounts of the *Prinsesse Charlotta Amalia* in 1743. In exceptional circumstances captains would supplement the company's largesse out of their own pockets. Svend Fenger of *Kronprinsessen af Dannemark* did this in 1752 after the shipwreck in Mossel Bay. His gifts included a slave boy he had bought in Calicut. The Cape authorities in turn generously invited foreign captains to share in festivities ashore. When Jacob Beckmand brought a new *Kongen af Dannemark* into Table Bay in 1752 after a long voyage with a protracted delay at Bergen in Norway, he and his principal officers were guests at the banquet of 8 April to celebrate the centenary of Dutch rule at the Cape at which toasts were drunk to Frederik V of Denmark, George II of Britain and Louis XV of France.

It was sometimes felt that captains made money by saving on the Danish company's official allocation of presents for distribution. In the course of a

quarrel between Sporing and his writer Peter Beck when *Kronprinsessen af Dannemark* was at the Cape in 1750, it appears that Swellengrebel was dissatisfied with his gifts. This may also have applied to the fiscal. Certainly, Beck was told by Pieter van Reede van Oudtshoorn that if it had not been for the high regard in which the Danish nation was held at the Cape he would have sent his "Kaffirs" - the fiscal's Asian helpers - on board the ship to confiscate all the goods which had been illegally embarked. Sporing, it was alleged, had done this under cover of darkness with the help of a Dane in the Dutch company's service. It would seem that Beck's open hostility to his captain had its source in his knowledge that Sporing had flouted the Danish company's own rules on private trade and had not been too scrupulous about making money on the side.

Private trade included the sale of slaves. This commerce was nominally a Danish company monopoly after 1732, but there was also an illegal trade. Slaves were evidently sent to the Cape for official sale for some years after 1737, but these transactions were on a limited scale. This was a period of labour shortage in the Dutch colony for the heavy work involved on company projects.

The agency established at the Cape to assist Danish captains was doubtless a very profitable undertaking. It was in the hands of Johannes Carolus de Wet, the Cape-born son of Jacobus de Wet of Amsterdam and his wife Christina, daughter of Olof Bergh of Gothenburg in Sweden and Anna de Koning, a woman of Dutch and Bengali descent. On Johannes Carolus de Wet's death on 1 May 1748 the business was continued by his widow, Maria Magdalena, daughter of Johann Blanckenberg of Berlin and his wife Catharina Baumann.

The activities of the agency are reflected in a number of Danish ships' logs of the Swellengrebel governorship years and later. It is evident too that the family also lodged captains and senior officers while their ships lay at anchor in the roadstead. Accounts for services rendered and for supplies delivered were channelled through the agency. In the accounts for Kierulf's *Prinsesse Charlotta Amalia* in 1743, Hendrik van der Heijden submitted a bill for meat and 30 live sheep, there was another for a shackle supplied and a third for a considerable purchase of wine and foodstuff. Waggon hire cost some four rix-dollars (R1,60), the quartermaster and crew of the Dutch company's harbour boat charged fifteen rix-dollars (R6) for ferrying goods to the ship and nine days' lodging for the captain and his purser Charles Hersting cost a further eighteen rix-dollars (R7,20). The total bill was reduced through the sale of a quantity of rice from the ship negotiated by the agent.

Similar accounts submitted through Maria Magdalena Blanckenberg to Captain Rønne of the *Prinsesse Vilhelmine Caroline*, returning from Tranquebar

ten years later, include charges for repair work, some of it carried out by the glazier Frans Lens. On both voyages the sick needed accommodation. Wilhelmina Berkman, widow of the baker Cornelis Goosen, put three men up from the *Prinsesse Vilhelmine Caroline* and a Dane from Copenhagen, Sverus Cornelissen, provided lodging for the bos'n of the same ship, Peter Knossen. On the voyage of the *Prinsesse Charlotta Amalia*, Barend Schmidt charged six rix-dollars (R2,40) for accommodating the sick sailors Svend Klingenberg and Hans Muller for almost a week.

Not all voyages to the Indies in the interests of the Asiatic Company of Copenhagen were purely trading ventures. An expedition which sailed from Denmark on 1 December 1751 and returned to the Danish capital on 1 July 1754 took place under naval auspices, but at the urgent request of the company. To view this show of force in perspective something of the background needs to be considered. The extension of the War of the Austrian Succession to the Indian Ocean region in a political and commercial struggle between Britain and France was to the benefit of such neutral traders as the Danes. The company prospered and Tranquebar also became a useful focal point for the expansion of an Asian country trade divorced from the problems of international rivalries. Spain opened the threatened Manila trade to Danish ships in 1742 as a counter to possible isolation if France and Britain went to war and the French governor general, Dupleix, organized this commerce in 1745 for the benefit of merchants in Asia without regard to nationality. The venture was a success and after the war had ended in 1748 Tranquebar began to flourish as a free trade centre. The company too had enjoyed several years of increased profits and stood poised for further growth and the conquest of new fields of commercial endeavour. Already some expansion had taken place on the Coromandel coast; now, Bengal and the Malabar coast beckoned.

There was, however, growing unrest on Tranquebar's doorstep. The recent Anglo-French struggle had destroyed the generally happy relations between the commercial agents of those powers. In the period of uneasy peace which preceded the Seven Years' War of 1756-1763 each side strove for advantage, making use of contending Indian potentates to further its own ends. Southern India was in a chronic state of unrest and warring Indians welcomed strong European allies. The resultant fighting threatened the hinterland of Tranquebar controlled by the Asiatic Company, a small enclave in the state of Tanjore.

It was against this backdrop of a threat to the security and prosperity of Tranquebar and a desire to expand Danish commercial activity that the Asiatic Company turned to Frederik V for assistance. The two naval vessels sent out to the Coromandel coast were the man-of-war *Nelleblad*, under the command of Jesper Hansen Reichardt, a sailor of world-wide experience

in the commercial service, and the frigate *Bornholm*, captained by Gerhard Sivers. This was not Reichardt's first voyage to the east. He had taken the Asiatic Company's *Kronprinsen af Danmark* to China in 1742-1743, a ship which ran aground in the Orkneys early in 1745 on a similar voyage under Kierulf's command. The expedition of 1751 carried a small military force and a cash grant from the king for the extension of Tranquebar's fortifications. The ships, which spent two weeks at the Cape in late April and early May 1752, anchored off Tranquebar on 5 July after a voyage marred by many fatalities. The senior captain, Reichardt, died soon after reaching the Danish headquarters on the Coromandel coast and Sivers assumed general command. Ole Hansen, a future rear admiral in the Danish navy, took over from Reichardt on *Nellebladet*.

There was no immediate threat to the peace in the neighbourhood of Tranquebar and on 29 September Sivers sailed with the two warships to Achin (Aceh) on the island of Sumatra, where good relations with the local ruler were reaffirmed. The expedition returned to Tranquebar on 27 January 1753 and in the following July the Danes despatched an impressive embassy under Sivers to Tanjore with military support. It was a show of strength with a definite purpose: the acquisition of more land in the neighbourhood of Tranquebar. The embassy failed in its design and after the exchange of courtesy gifts, including a portrait of the king from the Danes, the column returned empty-handed to Tranquebar in early August. Relations between Tanjore and Tranquebar remained uneasy as an episode in 1756, when a Danish officer and twenty men were killed, demonstrates.

Meanwhile Danish initiative in 1752 had laid the foundations of a prosperous factory at Calicut for the important pepper trade of the Malabar coast and in 1755 another was established in the same region at Colachel. In May 1753, while the Danish warships still lay at anchor in the Tranquebar roadstead, the first steps were taken for a return to Bengal. This was accomplished with French help by Jacob Christopher Soetmann in 1755, when the Asiatic Company obtained a factory at Serampore on the Hooghly. France and Denmark then enjoyed treaty relations. Further expansion was to follow on 1 January 1756 with the annexation of the Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean.

The naval presence made only a small contribution to the Danish drive for commercial advantage. Death and disease took their toll while the ships lay at Tranquebar and Sivers himself succumbed on 23 October 1753. The *Bornholm* thus came under the command of her first lieutenant Antoine Nicolas le Sage de Fontenay, an officer of old Picardy stock who prided himself on maintaining the French tradition. Fontenay was destined to rise to admiral's rank before his death in 1787. The two vessels called at the Cape again in February 1754 on their return voyage to Denmark after a

difficult crossing of the Indian Ocean which again caused many fatalities. Hansen was so hard pressed for fit sailors that he had to sign on 40 men at great expense while his ship *Nellebladet* lay in Saldanha Bay. A few of his new recruits were from Scandinavia, including Peter Petersen of Bergen and Frederik Blok of Christiania (Oslo).

With a single exception, all Danish shipping at the Cape between 1735 and 1755 either belonged to the Asiatic Company or served its interests. The exception, *Grevinden af Laurvig*, sailed on a different mission, with a final destination across the Atlantic. *Grevinden af Laurvig* was a slaver belonging to the West India and Guinea Company of Copenhagen and was hired to a British merchant adventurer for a joint voyage to Madagascar for the purchase of a human cargo.

The promoter of this scheme, Charles Barrington, had once been employed by the East India Company of London on its Madras station, but turned to the new Swedish company of 1731 to better his prospects and sailed for India two years later as first supercargo on *Drottningen Ulrica Eleonora*. The hostility of the older national companies to the Swedes resulted in an Anglo-French attack on their new factory at Porto Novo on the Coromandel coast and Barrington escaped to Tranquebar, where he embarked on the Danish return ship *Fredericus Quartus*, commanded by Claes Thaae. He spent almost three weeks at the Cape in April and May 1735 on the voyage to Copenhagen, lodging with Johannes Carolus de Wet. Once back in Europe, Barrington conceived the plan of setting himself up as a planter on the island of St Croix in the West Indies, recently acquired by Denmark. Slave labour would be required and he therefore approached the Danish West India and Guinea Company with a proposal to sail to Madagascar for the purchase of slaves for himself and other planters in the Danish West Indies. The company entered into an agreement with him, under which *Grevinden af Laurvig* was to sail with a Danish crew of 40, supplemented by a smaller British contingent in which Scotland was well represented. Both parties were to share in the profits. The young Danish captain and future rear admiral, Jacob Nicolaj Holst, had an English-speaking deputy in Ninian Bryce and Barrington as supercargo had a Danish understudy with experience in the East India trade, Sigvard Friis Bruun. Relations between the two national groups were often strained.

Grevinden af Laurvig left port on 8 June 1737, running for the Atlantic by the northerly route between the Orkneys and the Shetlands. The voyage south was marked by a series of quarrels between Danes and British, erupting into a full-scale riot when the ship reached the Cape Verde Islands. Holst and Barrington had the greatest difficulty in restoring order. *Grevinden af Laurvig* made landfall near Lion's Head on 30 October 1737 and cautiously entered Table Bay by night, skirting the scum on the water at the entrance

which to the inexperienced resembled breakers in the pale moonlight. Barrington's chief anxiety was that the Cape authorities would not grant the ship permission to stay, in view of the unusual nature of the expedition. He and his officers were, however, greeted civilly enough by the marine superintendent Möller when he came aboard on the morning of 31 October to discuss details of the voyage and the state of the crew's health over a glass of wine. The request for port facilities was at length put before the acting governor, Daniël van den Henghel, and the council of policy. To Barrington's relief, the request was granted. The council saw no threat to Dutch commerce in the proposed voyage and also considered that a refusal might well lead to Danish complaints at higher level in Europe. The decision was conveyed to the directors of the Dutch company who gave qualified approval of the action taken.

Barrington again lodged with Johannes Carolus de Wet and renewed acquaintance with other friends made on his last visit, among them the Swedish-born burgher Bergstedt and Jan de Wit (John White) of New York. Presents of food and drink were distributed to senior officials, although on this occasion those given to the fiscal, Johannes Needer, were more modest, as he only held that post in a temporary capacity. Friends ashore too were not forgotten in the distribution of gifts. Much of the time spent at the Cape was taken up with watering and provisioning. Some minor repairs to equipment were effected, as a result of which Barrington lost a large number of chairs which had been taken on shore to be mended, only to be stolen by the soldiery for sale round town. *Grevinden af Laurvig's* hull was scraped down to the water-line and the officers were granted shore leave, due care being taken to disguise the fact that this ostensibly Danish trading venture had British backing. Barrington had to deal with a number of disputes with his British colleagues and once more trouble arose between rival national factions in the course of which two pet dogs, the mascots of contending forces, were treated with considerable cruelty. Barrington had intended them as gifts for Malagasy potentates, but decided to leave them at the Cape to prevent further maltreatment.

Barrington made it his business to learn something of the political situation in the settlement following the death of the governor, Adriaan van Kervel, in September 1737. He noted the in-fighting which preceded Daniël van den Henghel's triumph over Swellengrebel for the acting governorship, a triumph which was short-lived as Swellengrebel was given the permanent post by the company's directors less than two years later. The British supercargo was also keen to learn as much as he could about his prospects in the Madagascar trade and approached Jan de Wit, who lent him the famous account of experiences on that island written by the English sailor Robert Drury. In other ways, however, Jan de Wit was less helpful than had been expected of a man who had known Madagascar in earlier days. Barrington said of him that

he was "only a Rattling Ignoramus as to these Matters, tho' he pretends to know more than Any One". Captain Bryce and his mate Walter Leith also made a few enquiries which promised to be more valuable.

The interest shown by a group of burghers in the possibility of profit from Barrington's voyage to Madagascar reflects the growing desire of Cape colonists for opportunities of private trade. Johannes Carolus de Wet was somewhat cautious, but was prepared to help his guest dispose of some slaves, should he return to the Cape. Barrington left him a list of the commodities he was prepared to accept at the settlement in part exchange: tea, coffee, porcelain, silks and arrack - an indication that imported goods were not in short supply in the colony. The brother of Barrington's host, Olof de Wet of Stellenbosch, Olof's attorney at the Cape, Jacob Lever, and the burgher Bergstedt were all prepared to invest in the Madagascar venture, but it was the German settler Bestbier, who had acquired a fortune in the Indies and had recently made his home in the colony, who showed the most enterprise in planning the disposal of surplus slaves on Barrington's intended return. Bestbier let it be known that government would raise no objection on payment of a 5% commission.

Charles Barrington, however, was destined never to complete the round trip and *Grevinden af Laurvig* did not anchor at the Cape again. The vessel sailed on 11 November 1737 on a further voyage characterized by continuing quarrels, open mutiny, hardships, sickness and the expenditure of much effort for little reward. Slaves were indeed purchased on a small scale, but Barrington's restless mind conceived another plan for future riches. He married a Malagasy princess and talked of a return to the island after disposing of his human cargo. Holst, exasperated by the supercargo's wayward actions, at last sailed from Madagascar for the coast of Mozambique, leaving Barrington ashore with the mate Leith and some other companions. Their fate is not known.

Grevinden af Laurvig ran aground off Mozambique in July 1738, Bryce and two fellow-Scots preferred Portuguese hospitality to a longer stay aboard and on the return voyage a fierce storm prevented the ship from reaching the safety of the Cape and compelled Holst to sail on for St Helena with a sick crew. 21 slaves were at last landed on the Danish island of St Thomas in the West Indies on 11 February 1739, just half of those originally shipped out of Madagascar. *Grevinden af Laurvig* finally reached Copenhagen on 28 August 1739, where an official enquiry found Barrington negligent and ordered the confiscation of his trade goods still aboard to help defray his debt to the West India and Guinea Company. One of the Danish mates, the coarse-mouthed Herman Dyssel, had been banished from the ship at Madagascar and delivered into the keeping of a Malagasy potentate. Dyssel's indignant wife lodged a complaint against the captain for leaving her husband,

as she put it, among the savages. Holst took *Grevinden af Laurvig* out on a second projected voyage to Madagascar, but she was wrecked outward-bound off the Dutch coast in March 1747 with great loss of life. Although Holst was saved, he found himself destitute.

The story of *Grevinden af Laurvig's* voyage of 1737-1739 is scarcely typical of those of other Danish vessels which called at the Cape in our period. It is interesting, however, in the context of the slave-trade and the visit of the ship to the Cape enables us to glimpse through Barrington's eyes something of the lives and activities of burghers and company officials, and to gain further insights into the economic structure of resident White society.

Danish callers at the Cape in the years 1735-1755 numbered only 39 and many dropped anchor there on more than one occasion, sometimes on both outward and return voyages. The Danes were the smallest contingent among the foreign visitors; the French were somewhat more numerous and certainly more significant in the drive for empire and commercial advantage across the Indian Ocean. Their trading voyages, which form the subject of the next chapter, reflect many aspects of those of their Danish competitors, but reveal other facets too of the Cape's contact with foreigners.