

I'm not a robot



No, the Cape of Good Hope is a location. The Cape of Good Hope is a rocky outcrop on the southwestern tip of Africa and is a part of the Table Mountain National Park in Cape Town, South Africa. Please Login or Register to create posts and topics.Quote from yannisl on May 31, 2021, 12:02 pmIn the recent John Dickson sale at Spinks (October 2020), I had the good fortune to purchase a lot related to the Dutch Period in the Cape. Dickson tried very hard to find out more about the cover, but he was unsuccessful. I was a bit luckier, the cover is shown in the attached pdf.The letter is well preserved with the exception of some minor ink corrosion. It has no writing at the back or inside. It is on watermarked paper, which is similar to the arms of Amsterdam.What arose my interest was the pencil notation with the date 1727 on the front. If you have any pre-adhesive covers with dates in the front please for the sake of postal historians that might come after us do not erase them. How they arose is an interesting story in itself. When Botha was the Chief Archivist in the Cape Archives, he was convinced by Jurgens to separate the letters from the covers and to sell the wrappers. It appears that either before or after the dates were pencilled. I have checked many covers and the dates correspond to the date that the letter was probably written based on other sources. I have seen over 120 such letter wrappers that span the 18th to the 19th century and stop at the 1830s, when the Orphan Chamber was disbanded by the English. In my estimation there might be anything between 500-1000 such letters.The letter is written in the Tamil script. The Tamil script (tami ariccuva) is an abugida script that is used by the Tamil people in India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and elsewhere, to write the Tamil language, as well as to write the liturgical language Sanskrit, using consonants and diacritics not represented in the Tamil alphabet. Certain minority languages such as Saurashtra, Badaga, Irula, and Paniya are also written in the Tamil script. I contacted Dr Herman Tiekens (1952) who studied Sanskrit and Tamil at the Kern Institute of the University of Leiden and wrote a book "Between Colombo and Cape Town. Letters in Tamil, Dutch and Sinhala, Sent to Nicolaas Ondaatje from Ceylon, Exile at the Cape of Good Hope (1728-1737)". He kindly confirmed my suspicion, that indeed was a letter addressed to Nicolaas Ondaatje and provided a transcription and a translation.At a point Nicolaas Ondaatje tried to do arbitrage on the slave trade. (See) on Dr Herma Tiekens's website! Uploaded files:Quote from Steve on June 1, 2021, 4:37 pmThis is an incredible cover and an even more extraordinary tale. I am sorry that it has taken me some time to reply but I was held up today by Bob Hill delivering some nice new material which I will be posting on the SAPC site as soon as I am done with GSWA. Then it went out of my mind until Mike Berry phoned to say how amazed he was by your cover.As you do not read Tamil, how did you know that this was a 'Cape' cover? I realise the extraordinary value of this cover as Cape social history - I spent some time on my daily walk yesterday singing its praises to my unimpressed wife - and regret I did not write you immediately to say "well done, a cover like this is worth a 100 woke apologists whining on about the iniquities of our history!" It would appear that our history is even worse and better, more nuanced and richly coloured and contradictory, than we ever believed." Thanks for posting this.Just out of curiosity, do you know how common the surname 'Ondaatje' is in Sri Lanka? There is a Michael Ondaatje, a well-known Sri-Lankan / Canadian writer. I am wondering if there isn't some link between the two? This is an incredible cover and an even more extraordinary tale. I am sorry that it has taken me some time to reply but I was held up today by Bob Hill delivering some nice new material which I will be posting on the SAPC site as soon as I am done with GSWA. Then it went out of my mind until Mike Berry phoned to say how amazed he was by your cover.As you do not read Tamil, how did you know that this was a 'Cape' cover? I realise the extraordinary value of this cover as Cape social history - I spent some time on my daily walk yesterday singing its praises to my unimpressed wife - and regret I did not write you immediately to say "well done, a cover like this is worth a 100 woke apologists whining on about the iniquities of our history!" It would appear that our history is even worse and better, more nuanced and richly coloured and contradictory, than we ever believed." Thanks for posting this.Just out of curiosity, do you know how common the surname 'Ondaatje' is in Sri Lanka? There is a Michael Ondaatje, a well-known Sri-Lankan / Canadian writer. I am wondering if there isn't some link between the two? Quote from Kloof on June 1, 2021, 5:02 pmHello Yannis!Like Steve, I was blown away by your research of the Tamil letter. My compliments on your success. Having known John Dickson well, and had much Natal and shipping advice from him over the years, I am sure he would have been delighted that one more conundrum has been resolved and filed away!Keep up the good work.Kind regardsMike (aka Kloof) Hello Yannis!Like Steve, I was blown away by your research of the Tamil letter. My compliments on your success. Having known John Dickson well, and had much Natal and shipping advice from him over the years, I am sure he would have been delighted that one more conundrum has been resolved and filed away!Keep up the good work.Kind regardsMike (aka Kloof) Quote from yannisl on June 1, 2021, 6:00 pm@Steve How did I know it was from the Cape?I had some clues like the handwritten date in pencil. High probability it was from the wrappers Jurgens and Botha took from the archives. The writing is characteristic. So it must have had a link to the Cape.I had already done the research on the faked VOC cover I wrote about in the VOC thread, so my gut feeling was that Dickson bought this one also from the same source and hence high probability it came from the same source.I knew that in the archives there are letters written in languages other than Dutch. For example there is the famous letter from the Sultan of the Comores. There are a few in Arabic and Sundanese etc.At first I suspected it might have been a local letter, just written in a South Indian language but maybe not Tamil.I knew about Dr Herman Tiekens's book and then the goddess of philatelic luck gave me a blessing...@Mikel am sure John would have been happy that the puzzle was solved. To his credit he tried hard to find more about it. He thought that the watermark was an important pointer. The lot was accompanied by his correspondence to Poole & Poole who were a firm of translators and as advertized on their letter head as Document researchers Decipherers, transcribers and translators of documents of all periods. Eric Poole wrote back and confirmed that the letter was in Tamil: The writing on (2) is, by another fluke, fairly familiar to me, though I cannot pretend to read it. I am pretty certain that it is in Tamil because I spent most of 1944 in Trincomalee and was more or less surrounded by things written in that language... In another attempt he also wrote to the Ceylon Study Circle. In a reply, Mr. Rodney Frost wrote he could not help either John was right about the watermark, that it was an Amsterdam paper maker's watermark. At the time the Dutch had a leading position in technology and commerce. The same was true e.g. for ship building, navigation techniques, printing, textile production, dykes and water management, and agricultural techniques (flower bulbs, cow breeding). @Steve How did I know it was from the Cape?I had some clues like the handwritten date in pencil. High probability it was from the wrappers Jurgens and Botha took from the archives. The writing is characteristic. So it must have had a link to the Cape.I had already done the research on the faked VOC cover I wrote about in the VOC thread, so my gut feeling was that Dickson bought this one also from the same source and hence high probability it came from the same source.I knew that in the archives there are letters written in languages other than Dutch. For example there is the famous letter from the Sultan of the Comores. 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In another attempt he also wrote to the Ceylon Study Circle. In a reply, Mr. Rodney Frost wrote he could not help either John was right about the watermark, that it was an Amsterdam paper maker's watermark. At the time the Dutch had a leading position in technology and commerce. The same was true e.g. for ship building, navigation techniques, printing, textile production, dykes and water management, and agricultural techniques (flower bulbs, cow breeding). Quote from Steve on June 1, 2021, 6:57 pmAs part of a long article on the economic conditions at the Cape in the run-up to the launch of the VOC Post Office in 1792, I intro with the Golden Age of Holland, (+ 1600 - 1660), a time when the Dutch were pre-eminent in Europe, in Science, Banking, Medicine, Art, etc. I will now revise my article and add your "ship building, navigation techniques, printing, textile production, dykes and water management, and agricultural techniques (flower bulbs, cow breeding)". Thanks for being so specific. I know that this is not at all relevant in this post but the fact that Holland had a Golden Age, much of it fuelled by the success of the VOC, has I think led some to think that the VOC was a cornucopia of plenty that kept on giving. Sadly, it dried up. The fact that the VOC was near bankrupt and facing liquidation in 1792 is not something many postal historians factor into the debate about the VOC handstamps' use at the Cape.As part of a long article on the economic conditions at the Cape in the run-up to the launch of the VOC Post Office in 1792, I intro with the Golden Age of Holland, (+ 1600 - 1660), a time when the Dutch were pre-eminent in Europe, in Science, Banking, Medicine, Art, etc. I will now revise my article and add your "ship building, navigation techniques, printing, textile production, dykes and water management, and agricultural techniques (flower bulbs, cow breeding)". Thanks for being so specific. 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