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THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE JOURNAL  
OF JAN VAN RIEBEECK

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The Journal of Jan van Riebeeck is the official <sup>kept at</sup> diary of the Cape settlement during the ten years of Van Riebeeck's régime. In it is recorded from day to day everything of note that happened from the day Van Riebeeck left Holland in 1651 until the date of his departure from the Cape in 1662.

When the 300th anniversary of the landing of Van Riebeeck still seemed a long way off, the Council of the Van Riebeeck Society -- a society which has been responsible for the publication of a large number of important South African documents -- decided to publish the Journal of the Founder on the occasion of the Tercentenary. The Van Riebeeck Society became even more ambitious: it decided to publish also a complete and accurate English translation.

Translations of the Journal -- or parts of it, at any rate -- have been attempted before: <sup>by Donald Moodie, and later by the old Cape</sup> ~~One hundred and fourteen years ago Donald Moodie translated~~ <sup>archivist, the Rev. H.C.V. Leibrandt, but</sup> ~~into English those portions of the Journal which dealt~~ <sup>these translations are far from complete,</sup> ~~with the natives and the relations between Europeans and~~

~~natives. A number of years later the~~  
~~editor, the Dutch - English Commercial Advertiser,~~  
~~announced plans which were then being made to publish a~~  
~~complete translation, but in the end nothing came of this~~  
~~scheme. In 1867 the Archivist of the Cape, the Rev.~~  
~~H.C.V. Leibrandt, published a translation in three~~  
~~small volumes, in which, however, the text was so~~  
~~thoroughly abbreviated that much of the content of the~~

~~of the original was lost.~~

The difficulties connected with the publication of the Journal, and especially its translation, were well appreciated by all the members of the Council of the Van Riebeeck Society. The Journal is a bulky document of 2,500 pages, closely written in the Gothic-Netherlands handwriting of the seventeenth century. Sometimes it is untidily and carelessly written; often there is a complete absence of punctuation marks. Here and there the language and style are involved and confused, so that it becomes exceedingly difficult to know what the diarist was trying to say. One had also continually to be on one's guard against words and expressions which, in modern Dutch, have lost their original idiomatic connotations. Thus, e.g. ~~gedistilleerd~~ <sup>gedistilleerde wateren</sup> would not be "distilled waters," but spiritous liquor, and a tonne gouts would not be "a ton of gold", but simply an expression of the time to denote <sup>one</sup> hundred thousand guilders. Hundreds of other examples of this nature could be quoted.

It is when the writer of the Journal endeavours<sup>r</sup> to translate a foreign name or, better still, when he aims at conveying the sound of the word in his own language, that we come across the most startling results. The English ship Welcome becomes the Willecompst and the Olive Branch becomes the Olyfftrack. Worse still is the fact that the English ship the Eagle becomes the Egel -- the Dutch word for a Hedgehog! Small wonder then that we find the diarist becoming vaguely puzzled about the figurehead of the ship which, he said, bore a much closer resemblance to "an eagle or other bird" than to a hedgehog.

It was no easy matter to obtain suitable translators for the Journal. In the end, however, we were fortunate. Mr. W.P.L. van Zyl, Chief translator to the House of Assembly, undertook to do Vol. I; Vol. II was translated by Dr. J. Smuts, formerly also a translator

to the House of Assembly and now on the staff of the Afrikaans Dictionary at Stellenbosch; and Volume <sup>III</sup> ~~Three~~ was done jointly by Messrs. C. Johnman and A. Ravenscroft, lecturers in English at Stellenbosch.

It was my task, as Editor, to provide the necessary historical introduction and explanatory annotations, and to check the translators' work. In this last part, which, needless to say, required an immense amount of research and study -- I was greatly assisted by *many people*. ~~Messrs. Victor de Kock, Archivist at the Cape Archives; D.H. Varley, Librarian of the South African Library; V. Walpole, Senior Lecturer in English at Stellenbosch; L.G. van Cordt, Editor of Die Kaapse Taalergief; and Dr. E.E. Meeuw, well-known through his work on old Cape highways.~~ To all these men I owe a debt of deep gratitude; ~~for~~ their continued and hearty co-operation, *made the translation of the Journal possible.*