

Establishing a Beachhead at the Altar

Endogamous marriage strategies emerged in the first generation of colonists born at the Cape and intensified with subsequent generations. Exogamous unions with newly-arrived immigrants, with locally-born settlers from previously unrelated families (including free blacks), and with manumitted slaves coexisted with endogamy, suggesting that parents and/or cohorts of siblings sought to reinforce existing connections and to make new alliances in every generation. 4

These marriage strategies moved with colonists from the more densely settled areas around Cape Town and Stellenbosch into the colonial hinterland. Pioneers took alliances, material culture, ideas about status and civility, and a notion of permanent, bounded, alienable land tenure with them into frontier areas. Of course, others fled to the frontier precisely because social norms—or at least enforcement mechanisms—were pliable, if not openly contested.⁴ Over the course of the eighteenth century, though, the majority of colonists in frontier regions increasingly tied their lot—and their identity—to the society anchored in Cape Town. (This argument about the increasing orthodoxy of the Cedarberg frontier is developed more fully in Chapter 6.) 5

Cross Reference:

Read about the colonial land tenure system.

(chapter3.html#p13)

Cross Reference:

Read a description of frontier material culture.

(chapter6.html#p41)

In frontier regions, family networks enabled colonists to establish households, physically settle on the land, and maintain their initially tenuous foothold in the landscape. It was the very function of marriage and land ownership that enabled eventual settler dominance in frontier regions. Moreover, it was through family connections and material culture that frontier settlers demonstrated not just their connection, but also their allegiance, to the dominant colonial society centered on Cape Town. Whether colonists lived near the harbor or hundreds of kilometers inland, their identity was tied to marriage and kinship—who they belonged to—and to wealth—what belonged to them. 6

Ideas about marriage—including the characteristics of desirable or eligible spouses—and expectations about family, both nuclear and extended, must have traveled with the soldiers, sailors, and officials of the VOC. Isolating precisely which traditions they took from a culturally heterogeneous Europe is difficult to accomplish, however. Immigrants came from across northwestern Europe, speaking versions of French, Dutch, German, and Scandinavian 7

languages. The Company filled its ranks with the sons of farmers, artisans, and unskilled workers from rural and urban homes. The VOC insisted upon Protestant practice, accepting Lutherans among the Calvinist majority. Whether in the first years of settlement—when the choice of partners was especially limited—or later in the eighteenth century when both natural increase and ongoing immigration had swelled the ranks of the free population, neither home language nor confessional preference appeared to preclude marriage. Individuals chose spouses for reasons other than place of origin or theological persuasion.

Although their theological revision dispensed with many other impediments to marriage ingrained in Catholic doctrine, both Luther and Calvin upheld the existing prohibition on marriage between first cousins.⁵ In spite of this religious restriction, and the importance subsequently accorded to it by some scholars,⁶ it is reasonable to suppose that a number of German-speaking and Dutch-speaking immigrants to the Cape thought close-cousin marriages were unexceptional, as the practice was common in their home region.⁷ **8**

At the Cape, repeated endogamous marriage was undoubtedly rooted in the transfer of wealth through partible inheritance, since marriage to relatives kept property within an extended family. Children of both wealthy families and those of more modest means regularly married their cousins, so in-marriage was not a strategy only to preserve elite social status.⁸ While Julia Adams and Jean Gelman Taylor argue convincingly for the social insularity among political elites achieved through strategic marriages in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies,⁹ similar marriage practices at the Cape were diffused across a broader economic spectrum.¹⁰ Marriage across a nebulous, permeable boundary between gentry families and other farmers happened often. Thus endogamy, rather than being used to create or sustain a narrow elite, was instead a component of a more general settler identity that embraced landed gentry, middling stock farmers, and households of modest means. Whatever their class position, and regardless of ethnic, regional, or racial origin, a significant marker of settler identity was marriage within recognized family networks. **9**

Bachelor immigration initially sustained the free population of the Cape settlement. The colonists did not recognize or seek to marry into indigenous elite (or merchant) families as they did in parts of Southeast Asia, so the notion of kin, or of extended family, could not have been paramount in the first years of the settlement, or among the first marriages at the Cape. Family connections were in play by the time the first Cape-born generation married, though. Kin networks, endogamy, and repeated affinal marriages were evident by the second generation, establishing patterns that persisted throughout the eighteenth century. A detailed look at the extended family started by two seventeenth-century immigrants illustrates the process. **10**

Colonial Marriage Strategies: Consider the van der Merwes

As one of South Africa's early settlers and the *stamvader* (forefather) of an abundant family, Willem van der Merwe has something of an iconic status in South Africa's collective memory, or at least the name van der Merwe does. So it is convenient that van der Merwe marriage patterns over three generations reflect strategies that were typical of many colonial families throughout the eighteenth century. 11

I do not want to establish the van der Merwes as a normative baseline to which some families conformed or from which others deviated. Instead, I want to argue emphatically that a family's marriage strategies were not isolated or unitary, but rather resulted from decisions made by many individuals from a variety of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and class backgrounds in Europe, eventually creating specifically colonial networks of overlapping kin groups and self-conscious strategies for consolidating and transferring landed wealth. 12

If we accept "van der Merwe" as an icon of "Dutch" settler society, and if we understand some of the van der Merwes' motivations for choosing marriage partners, then we can see that the early van der Merwes were unsurprisingly typical—though they were not particularly "Dutch." They were also not all men; and most significantly, they were not all van der Merwes in name, though they were important members of the family. 13

Fig. 5.1. Van der Merwe Monument at Boplaas 14

"My name is van der Merwe," proclaims the title of a history and genealogy of this prolific colonial family.¹¹ Clearly, in this context, the surname is an integral part of individual and family identity. Descendents of van der Merwe sons, those who carry the family name, belong to the group. Because their name is van der Merwe, we know who they are—at least in a historical context. Oud Hendrik van der Merwe (1698–1762), for example, did not leave traces of a personal, interior identity. However, extant records reveal what his society thought was relevant to Hendrik's place in it. We can also see what subsequent generations have preserved, perpetuated, emphasized, and, significantly, what they have forgotten.

Hendrik was the youngest child of Elsie Cloete and Willem, the *stamvader*. He married three times and was the father of eight children. When he came of age he married his first cousin, Catharina Cloete.¹² They were both 19 years old. After Catharina's death, Hendrik married Aletta Keyser, thirty years his junior. She died in childbirth, or shortly thereafter, and within a year Hendrik took another bride, Maria Fick. At his death, Hendrik had six farms, 29 slaves, and considerable material wealth.¹³ 15

Such is the outline of a life, broad strokes without a lot of detail. Even with this limited sketch, though, we know more about Hendrik van der Merwe than we do about most of the residents of the Cape in the eighteenth century. We could, of course, create fuller biographies of other colonists, even of other van der Merwes. Hendrik, however, is an ideal place to start looking at a van der Merwe family portrait, even with the limited perspective we have on him. **16**

Genealogy Chart: Fig. 5.2. The Van der Merwe Family **17**

A member of the first generation born in South Africa, Hendrik was one of only two brothers to have sons of his own. Consequently, his contribution to the founding of a settler family with a name still recognizable in South African society seems, at first glance, straightforward. In fact, the details revealed in a close focus on Hendrik highlight the importance of women and emphasize the major role played by individuals not named van der Merwe in perpetuating a discernable family identity.

Though already fifty when he entered his second marriage, Hendrik had six of his eight children after that point. Apparently Catharina was a weak reproductive link in an otherwise fecund chain; she had only two children in nearly thirty years of marriage. I assume she lived until a year or two before Hendrik's second marriage because it does not seem likely that a young, prosperous farmer raising two daughters would have remained a widower for long.¹⁴ Hendrik's second wife, Aletta, like so many settler women, had her first baby within a year of marriage and her second two years later. Unfortunately, she did not live long after that. Hendrik promptly married again, undoubtedly needing help with 2-year-old Hendrik Junior and baby Aletta Sibella. **18**

Genealogy Chart: Figure 5.2g. Hendrik van der Merwe d'oud **19**

The years from 1747 to 1750 were particularly eventful—and undoubtedly emotional—for Hendrik. Assuming that he lost his first wife shortly before his second marriage, Hendrik and his surviving daughter, Catharina Margaretha, left some of their grief at the altar. They both married in 1747. Hendrik became a father and a grandfather within a year; within the next two years, however, both his wife and his daughter passed away. The widowers, one only 23 years old, the other 52, promptly remarried. Catharina Margaretha's husband took his second bride in September 1750, three months before Hendrik wed Maria Fick. Both men were members of families with social status and significant land holdings in Cape Town and Stellenbosch.¹⁵ They seemed to have no trouble finding wives, in spite of the imbalanced sex ratios that left some settler men bachelors (though not necessarily celibate or childless).¹⁶

Hendrik's third marriage seems to have been motivated by procreation. With only two of his four children still living, he remarried soon after Aletta's death and continued fathering children. Just two of Hendrik and Maria's four children married, though. They were both sons, **20**

who, along with Hendrik Junior, Aletta's firstborn, were able to pass on the van der Merwe name. Just one of Hendrik's four van der Merwe grandsons married, however, and it does not appear that he had children.¹⁷ One of those grandsons, Theodorus, was the son of Hendrik's daughter, Aletta Sibella. She married her first cousin once removed, Nicolaas van der Merwe Isaaksz.¹⁸ Aletta Sibella and Nicolaas's children were, of course, called van der Merwe. Theodorus did not marry, though, so all of Hendrik's great-grandchildren appear in the family trees of the Myburghs, the du Toits, and the de Villiers, among others.¹⁹ Whatever their surnames, these descendants' material circumstances were undoubtedly influenced by the material legacy Hendrik bequeathed.²⁰ His children were not poor; those who lived long enough married into families possessed of landed wealth in Stellenbosch and Drakenstein.

Women's Role in Patrilineal Descent

In a patrilineal society with patronymic conventions, record keeping has been organized around men and their male offspring. South Africa's early colonial landed gentry, its dynasties of wealth and power, and even the accumulation and transfer of more modest properties in frontier regions have all been recognized according to family names determined by relationships to men.²¹ The procreation of those families was, naturally enough, equally dependent on women's participation, which is starkly evident on Hendrik's branch of the van der Merwe tree. Without Aletta Keyser and Maria Fick, the branch would have ended. Even with Aletta's and Maria's van der Merwe sons and son-in-law, Hendrik's van der Merwe offspring ended with his grandchildren, reminding us of how important it is to consider both halves of a matrimonial union, since the transfer of wealth and kin relationships were not defined only according to family name or male descendants. **21**

Hendrik's succession of three wives underscores the importance of women and men in reproduction. Five of his children married cousins, thus reinforcing family relationships. Hendrik's daughter Aletta Sibella, through her marriage to Nicolaas van der Merwe, was as important in creating the next generation of van der Merwe sons as her brothers were. The random distribution of Y chromosomes and the fate of those who did not live long enough to have children of their own determined that none of Hendrik's van der Merwe grandsons reproduced, meaning family connections assumed other names. **22**

Preferences for marrying within certain families, the advantages of marriage between cousins, and the significance of natal family relationships for both men and women hinted at in Hendrik's case are more clearly evident when the van der Merwe portrait is expanded to include his siblings. Petronella, one of Hendrik's elder sisters, married Johannes Cloete—her first cousin and the elder brother of Hendrik's first wife, Catharina. The parents must have **23**

influenced the selection of spouses, since the marriage of two van der Merwe siblings to their first cousins reinforced the relationship between their family and the Cloetes first forged between Willem and Elsie.

Immigration and Endogamy

For the early years of European settlement at the Cape, when most settlers were immigrants, 24
 portraying marriage as a relationship between families is, perhaps, overstating the case. By the time the first generation of Cape-born children married, though, familial relationships were striking. For example, Oud Willem van der Merwe came to the Cape from the Low Countries as a bachelor, a man without local family connections. A midshipman, he arrived aboard the *Dordrecht* serving as an arquebusier. The following year the Company released him from service and granted him burgher rights. Seven years after that, in 1668, he married Elsie Cloete, daughter of Jacob and Fytje, both from Cologne. Elsie was born in Europe and came to the Cape with her parents and brother, Gerrit.

Jacob Cloete first arrived at the Cape in 1652; he was one of the first free burghers and 25
 received a farm on the Liesbeeck River in 1657. Though repatriated to Europe in 1761, he eventually returned to the Cape as a corporal. His third and fourth children were born at the Cape; all of his children came of age and married locally. He was killed two months before his youngest child, Coenraad, married. The governor's official journal entry of 23 May 1693 describes his murder and acknowledges the respect Cloete commanded as one of the men who helped to found the colony.²² Given that European men outnumbered European women by more than two to one in the late seventeenth century,²³ Cloete's daughters Elsie and Catharina would have had their pick of single men as husbands. That Elsie married Willem van der Merwe suggests his seven years as a free burgher were both respectable and financially promising. Despite having an illegitimate child with a slave,²⁴ Willem van der Merwe married into the Cloete family, thus linking his fortune to a prominent local landowner and his future to a nascent colonial dynasty.²⁵

As an immigrant settler, Oud Willem van der Merwe also founded a colonial legacy of his own. 26
 Of the 13 children he and Elsie had, only three did not marry. Surely it was not coincidence that two of the ten who did—Petronella and Hendrik—wed first cousins, children of Elsie's brother Gerrit. Both Elsie and Willem were immigrants to the Cape; Elsie as a daughter in her natal family, Willem as a single young man. Two of their children's marriages reinforced the couple's only significant family relationship—to the Cloetes. The fact that Elsie's children married Gerrit's children and not the offspring of her other brother and sister may have had to do with lack of opportunity rather than a plan to create particular affiliation only with her

brother Gerrit. Catharina Cloete and her husband Jan van Brienen did not have children; only one of Coenraad's two sons married, and both of them were a bit too young to be ideal matches for the van der Merwe daughters. Gerrit's children were the only option.

Moreover, marriage among multiple siblings made sense in the context of partible inheritance.²⁶ In the case of a large family dividing an inheritance that included landed property, the ability to exchange interests in particular farms, or to have a roughly equivalent inheritance from a spouse's family available to buy out a sibling's share, meant that farms could be transmitted across generations without being subdivided into parcels too small to be useful. In a family with six children, at the death of a parent the surviving spouse would inherit half the estate; the children would split the other half equally. One-twelfth of a farm was not enough to offer subsistence, let alone a stepping-stone to prosperity. If, however, a pair of siblings was willing to cooperate with siblings from another family, an equitable exchange was possible that would put both couples on a better footing. Assume that two siblings from family A married two siblings from family B. For argument's sake, presume that the A siblings inherited one-twelfth of their parents' estate, and the B siblings inherited one-tenth of their parents' estate. If the portions were roughly equivalent, or if modest credit could be arranged to make up any difference, the first couple could exchange a share of the A family inheritance for a share in the B family estate, an equation re-stated in Figure 5.3.²⁷ Thus one couple would have received two portions of the A estate, while the other couple received two portions of the B estate. One-fifth of an interest in a farm was closer to viable, and could have provided enough collateral to buy out other siblings, thus leaving the farm intact. Given the frequency with which sets of siblings made multiple marriages between families, negotiating inheritance certainly played a prominent role in marriage decisions.²⁸

Fig. 5.3. Inheritance Advantages of Close Cousin Marriages

The unions between van der Merwes and Cloetes show that this strategy was in use from the first generation of settlers born in South Africa. Marriage served to reinforce relationships as well as to consolidate landed property. However, in a recently established colony with growth fueled by ongoing immigration, marriage only within existing relationships was not possible. Elsie, for example, did not have enough nieces and nephews to marry her children. Nor would complete insularity have been desirable, since marriage to other families or to immigrants was a potential source of new wealth, not to mention an opportunity to cement alliances with neighbors and strengthen relationships with politically powerful individuals.

Willem and Elsie's Cape-born children entered into 17 marriages with partners from 16 different families. Five of those unions were second (or third) marriages after the death of a spouse. Of the 17 spouses, two were Cloete cousins born at the Cape, three other partners were locally born, and 12 were immigrants. Hendrik alone accounts for three of the five Cape-born partners: Catharina Cloete, Aletta Keyser, and Maria Fick. His first marriage to his cousin was

likely both a familial and a financial advantage. His second marriage, when he was 50 years old, and his third, when he was 52, were to younger women whose fathers were less prosperous than Hendrik himself. Already established, Hendrik does not appear to have sought wealth or status through his marriages later in life. It seems he wanted children, not material or political gain. However, he was alive when his eldest daughter chose a husband—her first cousin, Albert Myburgh Albertsz. This marriage both reinforced familial alliances and connected Catharina Margaretha to a family with property.²⁹ Although Hendrik may have used other criteria for his subsequent marriages, he influenced his daughter to make the same kind of choices his parents undoubtedly helped him make in deciding on his first bride, favoring existing family connections and wealth.

In Hendrik's generation, locally born spouses were the minority. His three elder sisters, who married Cape-born men, appear to have chosen their partners with family, prestige, or wealth in mind. Petronella got all three with Jan Cloete, her first cousin, the son of an influential family who was eventually named a heemraad himself, and a property owner who amassed significant wealth by the time he died.³⁰ Helena's first husband, Jacob van As, was already a widower when they married. At his death, she inherited a farm in Drakenstein, a farm in Paarl with a large stand of timber, 11 slaves, and enough tools and livestock to indicate a successful, though not particularly wealthy, farm.³¹ Elsie married Albert Myburgh Senior, the only son of a Dutch immigrant. Over the course of their marriage the couple accumulated property, vineyards, livestock, and slaves; their children certainly numbered among the nascent gentry.³² It is unclear whether Albert already had significant wealth at the time of their marriage, or if their material success was due to the combined forces of van der Merwe and Myburgh energy and resources. **30**

Oud Willem and Elsie Cloete's other children married immigrants, meaning that family connections could not have been a factor in their attractiveness as spouses. Not all of them were well-established when they married, suggesting that although financial resources were important, they were not a defining feature for a potential bride or groom. Whereas some members of the first South African-born generation of van der Merwes appear to have had logical material or familial reasons for their choice of spouse, other siblings married for their partner's potential, or for mutual attraction, or for any of a host of reasons beyond speculation. **31**

Among the immigrant partners, three came from the Netherlands, six from German-speaking regions, and one was a Huguenot who came to the Cape as a child with her parents. Three of those immigrant men—Barend Burger, Pieter Willem van Heerden, and Nicolaas Janse van Rensburg—clearly married into the van der Merwe clan. As immigrants without incumbent family obligations, they were absorbed into their wives' social world. Their children carried their fathers' surnames, but their eventual marriages were van der Merwe-driven **32**

relationships. The first two generations of Burgers, van Rensburgs, and van Heerdens born at the Cape showed a striking propensity to marry van der Merwes, which created a multiply-intersecting extended family.

Genealogy Chart: Fig. 5.4. Burger-Van der Merwe Marriages

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Marietjie, the third van der Merwe child born at the Cape, married Barend Burger, a blacksmith from Lübeck. They had five children before he died in 1705. She remarried a year later, but did not have children with her second husband, German immigrant Lambert Smit. After Barend's death, Marietjie owned two farms near Paarl and another near the grain mill at Drakenstein. Though their house was minimally furnished, the couple had acquired 11 slaves, 600 sheep, and 80 head of cattle.³³ Financially, Marietjie was an attractive widow. With three farms to manage, a baby still at her breast, and her eldest child only 7 years old, we can imagine Marietjie's motivations to remarry, and to choose a man without children or other family obligations of his own. When it came time for her children to marry, however, none of them chose immigrant partners. The three eldest married first cousins, children of Marietjie's two elder siblings. The choice of which of their many cousins to marry may have had to do with affinities among the siblings, or with attraction between the cousins, or simply the logistics of age and availability. Perhaps Marietjie's sons married the children only of their mother's elder siblings because the daughters of her younger siblings were just too young. Even the inheritance advantage of a first-cousin marriage might not have been worth waiting for.

Genealogy Chart: Fig. 5.5. Aletta van der Merwe's Children and Their Marriages

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Aletta, ten years younger than Marietjie, married Nicolaas Janse van Rensburg. Already a widow with three young children; she had seven more with van Rensburg. One of Aletta's van Staden children married an immigrant; one of her van Rensburg children married a locally born but unrelated partner. The rest of her children married individuals already connected to the van der Merwes by birth or marriage. Her children with Nicolaas van Rensburg married within a much tighter orbit than her children with van Staden. It is impossible to assess the degree to which Aletta's husbands influenced their children's choice in marriage partners. Since van Staden had been dead for nearly two decades before his children married, he probably did not impart words of wisdom directly into their ears, but he might have made his wishes known to Aletta. Did Nicolaas van Rensburg actively support the marriage of most of his children to their van der Merwe cousins? Did he passively observe matrimonial alliances being crafted by his wife and her siblings? Or did five van Rensburg siblings just fall for their cousins? Given the number of van der Merwe–van Rensburg marriages in subsequent generations, there must have been strategy as well as affinity in play. Moreover, the degree of consanguinity in these cases was particularly close.

Genealogy Chart: Fig. 5.6. Botha-Van der Merwe Marriages
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Three of the seven van Rensburg children married first cousins. A fourth married Anna Sophia Burger, his first cousin once removed. Hendrik van Rensburg married his niece.³⁴ The eldest van Rensburg child, Johannes, married Anna Maria Botha. Theirs was the third union of their generation between the Botha and van der Merwe families, a practice that continued in subsequent generations. The van Rensburg family fortunes and social alliances were clearly bound tightly to the van der Merwe network.

Unlike her sisters Marietjie and Aletta, Magdalena van der Merwe was not widowed early, so she married only once—Dutch immigrant Pieter Willem van Heerden. The proportion of endogamous marriages among their 11 children was not as high as among their Burger (three of five marriages) and van Rensburg (five of seven marriages) cousins, but among the three van Heerdens who did marry van der Merwes, the practice of intermarriage remained strong across subsequent generations. Only eight of Magdalena and Pieter's children married. Two of them married Jordaan siblings, two more married unrelated local men, and Aletta van Heerden married German immigrant Christian Ernst in 1735. Aletta's marriage to an immigrant was atypical of the van der Merwe clan in the period.

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Cross Reference: Read about the Burger-van der Merwe children. (chapter6.html#p23)
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Cross Reference: Compare Aletta's marriage to the family's prevailing endogamous practices. (chapter6.html#p41)

Genealogy Chart: Fig. 5.7. Van Heerden-Van der Merwe Marriages
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The prevalence of familial endogamy evident in the second and third generations of van Heerden marriages was more common. Eleven of Magdalena and Pieter's grandchildren married their van der Merwe cousins, including the daughter of Jacob van Heerden and Anna Jordaan, which suggests that the continued van Heerden link to the van der Merwes was not influenced only by those who themselves had married their first cousins. The practice applied broadly.

Among the first Cape-born generation, marriage to both local and immigrant spouses established parameters for repeated intermarriage in subsequent generations. The first-generation van der Merwes looked to their siblings' families when suggesting or helping to arrange mates for their children. The next generation could turn to the offspring of both siblings and cousins, and they did. **38**

Spectacular Proliferation: Schalk van der Merwe and Anna Prevot

This expanded van der Merwe family portrait would not be complete without Schalk, the eldest son, and his wife, Anna Prevot. A Huguenot refugee, Anna came to the Cape as a child. She sailed with her family, including older brother Abraham and younger sister Elisabeth, on the *Schelde* in 1688. She was seven years old when the Prevots arrived, and 15 or 16 when she married. Shell's data shows that the Huguenot arrivals overwhelmingly contributed men to the colonial population, suggesting that Anna (or her parents) could have found a suitable French-speaking partner, had marriage within the Huguenot community been of primary importance.³⁵ Her sister Elisabeth's first husband was, in fact, a fellow Huguenot.³⁶ Schalk, son of Dutch and German immigrants, was part of a large brood. At the time of his marriage, his youngest siblings were not yet born, but adding a child or two to the partible inheritance equation would not have changed his prospects substantially. The *opgaaf* suggests his parents could sustain themselves, but they were not wealthy,³⁷ so his attractiveness as a husband was not likely financial.³⁸ Perhaps, though, even a few head of breeding stock from his father looked more promising than the lot of many Huguenot sons in the 1690s: landless, in debt, and still dependent on support from the VOC.³⁹ **39**

Schalk's marriage to an immigrant woman was unusual simply because there were few female migrants. His coming-of-age coincided with the demographic bubble of Huguenots. Although only a small percentage of them arrived as families, Schalk nevertheless benefited from this influx of European-born women. Given the small size of the settler population at the end of the seventeenth century, a new face may have been reason enough to marry.⁴⁰ **40**

Whatever their respective motivations, the couple proved long-lived and prolific. Anna had her first child at 16 and her seventeenth at 44. She survived 28 years of childbearing, a feat remarkable enough in itself to merit historical notice. Sixteen of these children found spouses. Imagine Anna, pregnant with Gerrit (her fourteenth child) giving marital advice to Elsje, her eldest. *Think about your cousin, Willem Burger. He's just turned 20. He and his brother Andries have started running sheep out by the Twenty-four Rivers. Your cousin Margaretha* **41**

is homesteading with their older brother Barend in the Land van Waveren, so they'd be close by. In three years, when your sister Maria turns 16, she could marry Andries, and you'd all be neighbors. Think about Willem. He's a good match.

In fact, Elsje and her younger sister Maria did marry their first cousins, the Burger brothers. **42** The two couples claimed neighboring loan farms; their cousin, Margaretha Pasman, and her husband, the eldest Burger brother, claimed Twee Jonge Gezellen in the Tulbagh valley.⁴¹ We are not likely ever to know how much choice the young people exercised in selecting their marriage partners, or how much enthusiasm they had for sharing the work of opening previously unclaimed land for colonial settlement, but this pattern happened often enough to look like conscious strategy rather than repeated coincidence. Whether their parents engineered the matches or the couples made their own plans, the prevalence of relationships sustained by women poses a challenge to the assumption that "patriarchal" fathers controlled marriage choices.⁴² Women—mothers, aunts, sisters, and cousins—linked families across the landscape, and across generations.⁴³

Of course, male relationships and male relatives were important, too. The van der Merwe **43** sisters were related to their Burger cousins/husbands through their father, Schalk *and* his sister, Marietjie. Schalk's relationship to his siblings was also key to other unions by his children. Willem, Martha, and Gerrit married van Heerden first cousins (children of their Aunt Magdalena). David, Pieter, and Izaak married van Rensburg first cousins (children of their Aunt Aletta).

Since Schalk and Anna had so many children, the preference for marriage to first cousins and **44** the practice of multiple sibling unions is particularly resonant. Despite ongoing Christian injunctions against endogamous marriage with close relatives and affines, including a prohibition of first-cousin marriages reiterated by Calvin,⁴⁴ there were always exceptions in early-modern Europe.⁴⁵ In general, though, familial restrictions and the limits of geography meant that a proportion of Europeans remained unmarried, since they observed the injunctions.⁴⁶ Whether because of the relatively small population, because of material considerations of partible inheritance, or simply a question of preference, colonial society at the Cape bent these Christian, European norms. Consequently, consanguineous unions were a significant proportion of the consecrated marriages.

Some Elements of Settler Identity

Schalk and Anna's 16 surviving children made 19 marriages; those unions were to only 10 families, three of which were already related. With 16 progeny to marry off, Schalk, Anna, or the children themselves made alliances with only seven new families, five of which were Huguenot. **45**

Anna Prevot seems to have played as important a role as Schalk in identifying, suggesting, or arranging mates. All but one of their children who did not marry one of Schalk's nieces or nephews married a child descended from a Huguenot refugee, though none of these families was related to Anna. Other Huguenot-descended families did make first-cousin marriages (the du Toits and Moutons, for example), so it is not possible to make a blanket statement about the refugees having a different understanding or application of Calvin's precepts than the Dutch-speaking Reformed Church members. **46**

Patricia Romero recently categorized the Huguenot population as liminal and hybrid, on one hand,⁴⁷ and as distinct bearers of a "diaspora identity" trying to "cling to their Frenchness," on the other.⁴⁸ She argues against an older literature that points to a fairly rapid dissolution of a separate Huguenot identity.⁴⁹ Romero admits her initial assumption—that the Huguenots sought to maintain a distinct community through endogamy—was not born out by her research, yet she nevertheless argues that the refugees "tried to maintain their Frenchness in their choice of marriage partners and patterns of name giving."⁵⁰ **47**

The problem with her argument is that the families of Huguenot refugees were not markedly more or less endogamous than settler families descended primarily from Dutch- or German-speaking immigrants.⁵¹ The practice of naming children after their grandparents, aunts, and uncles was also widely used; sets of first names tended to circulate within families, regardless of the *stamvaders'* and *stammoeders'* places of origin. Most importantly, the marriages of Anna Prevot's children suggest that traces of unions among Huguenot-descended colonists should be pursued with equal vigor through matrilineal ties, and not just through patrilineal descent formalized with patronymic conventions. Though there is no evidence to suggest that Anna Prevot and Schalk van der Merwe's children thought of themselves as Huguenot, or part Huguenot, little more than French surnames link other descendents of the refugees to a particular Huguenot identity among the colonists at large. Given the extent to which families with Dutch and German surnames married in close circles, and the numerous van der Merwe spouses with Huguenot names, we need more than marriage patterns to define a specific settler identity such as Huguenot.⁵² Marriage as a component of social identity is useful to differentiate in broad strokes between settlers and other colonial inhabitants. Marriages also can determine the scope of family networks, but as an analytical tool it is not fine-grained **48**

enough to differentiate one kin group from another, since settlers married across class and other differences. Consequently, the question of sustained Huguenot identity or community affiliation remains open to more investigation.

In spite of a romanticized notion of persistent Huguenot identity,⁵³ the lack of pervasive Huguenot endogamy when traced only through descendants of men in the first two generations of marriages suggests that French-speaking colonists—like their Dutch and German descended neighbors—considered a variety of factors important in a prospective spouse. Language, religion, and community figured alongside family relationships, wealth, property claims, geographical proximity, and social status.⁵⁴ Among these considerations, family relationships were prominent. 49

Increasing Endogamy

Fig. 5.8. Declining Marriage to Immigrants in Three Generations of Van der Merwes 50

Unlike the diversity of partners seen in the first Cape-born generation of van der Merwe marriages (17 unions to 16 different families), second-generation spouses came from a more circumscribed pool. Oud Willem and Elsie had 118 grandchildren who solemnized 73 marriages. Those 73 spouses came from only 36 families; 25 of those marriages were to first cousins, and another four were to other close relatives, meaning that 40 percent of second-generation partners were close kin. In contrast, only six spouses were immigrants, making marriages like those of Aletta van der Merwe, mentioned previously in this chapter, rare in this family. Fourteen of those 73 marriages were the second consecutive unions between families. The Burgers, Cloetes, van Heerdens, Myberghs, Pasmans, and van Rensburgs established multiple relationships with the van der Merwe family that spanned generations and helped to sustain colonial social networks into expanding frontier regions.

Colonial families at the Cape and the multiply-intersecting alliances among them were local manifestations of kinship patterns also present in Europe and the Dutch East Indies. The connections forged or reinforced through marriage at the Cape were predominantly local, rooted in the colony rather than a wider imperial orbit. There were, however, a few exceptions in which a Cape marriage reflected European or Asian connections among elite Company officials. Moreover, some of the Huguenots who immigrated as a group made local marriages that reflected family relationships transplanted from Europe or made during the long Atlantic passage. Even families that honored such external connections also made marriage alliances within local networks, indicating the importance of local kinship in creating Cape colonial identity that differentiated settlers from indigenous Africans and Asian slaves. 51

Genealogy Chart: Fig. 5.9. Prevalence of Close Cousin Marriages and Marriage to Immigrants Across Three Generations of One Van der Merwe Descent Line

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The van der Merwes alone were not responsible for establishing a pattern of repeated in-marriage. Rather, they were part of an early colonial population in the process of adapting European, Asian, and African cultural practices to their local circumstances. These early colonists created new norms to meet the particular exigencies of life under VOC rule as they moved from the shores of Table Bay into an increasingly colonized hinterland. Family alliances, marriage strategies, marital expectations, social status, inherited wealth, gendered social roles, ideologies of race, and enslaved or subordinated labor all emerged in concert in the settled areas of the Cape, Stellenbosch, and Drakenstein districts at the turn of the eighteenth century. This complicated bundle accompanied the van der Merwes, Burgers, van Rensburgs, Moutons, Lubbes, Smits, and their compatriots northward to the Cedarberg frontier, where, in search of available land, the growing colonial population began to associate a settler, or dominant, identity specifically with connection to established families and with the ability to make specific, demarcated, alienable claims to land.

Understanding the extent of these family networks, their repeated reinforcement across generations, and the centrality of women to these relationships complicates prevailing assumptions about both race and patriarchy in South African history. Belonging in settler society was not necessarily about being "white," or being descended only from Europeans, but rather about claiming relationships in kin networks, which could be accomplished by marriage. Those kin networks, in turn, were determined through both maternal and paternal ties, making extended families larger than the list of male-descended heirs typically reconstituted in genealogies. Understanding settler identity thus starts with family relationships. Placing individuals in overlapping and multivalent kin networks is an important step toward moving beyond taxonomic labels.

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Notes

Note 1: ARA: VOC 10481, *Inkomende stukken van de kantoren*. Letter from Jan de la Fontaine (verbatim copy), 2 Aug. 1731.

Note 2: Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996).

Note 3: The "white" population at the Cape was, of course, not entirely comprised of Europeans and their descendants. For examples, see H.F. Heese, *Groepe sonder grense: Die rol en status van die gemengde bevolking aan de Kaap, 1652–1705* (Bellville: Institute for Historical Research, 1985; translated by Delia Robertson as *Cape Melting Pot: The Role and Status of the Mixed Population at the Cape, 1652–1795* Johannesburg: self-published, 2006); R. Viljoen, "'Till Murder Do Us Part': The Story of Griet and Hendrik Eksteen," *South African Historical Journal* 33 (1995), 13–32; Richard Elphick and Robert Shell, "Intergroup Relations: Khoikhoi, Settlers, Slaves and Free Blacks, 1652–1795," in Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, eds., *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652–1840*, 2nd ed. (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1989), 184–239.

Note 4: Leonard Guelke, "The Making of Two Frontier Communities: Cape Colony in the Eighteenth Century," *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 12: 3 (1985), 419–48. Hermann Giliomee articulates an open and closed frontier model in "Processes in Development of the Southern African Frontier," in *The Frontier in History: North American and South Africa Compared*, eds. Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 19–26. For the frontier space for lawlessness, see Nigel Penn, "Fugitives on the Cape Frontier" and "Droster Gangs of the Bokkeveld and Roggeveld, 1770–1800," both in *Rogues, Rebels and Runaways: Eighteenth-Century Cape Characters* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999), 73–100, 147–66.

Note 5: Jeffrey R. Watt, *The Making of Modern Marriage: Matrimonial Control and the Rise of Sentiment in Neuchâtel, 1550–1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 43–44.

Note 6: Jack Goody, *The European Family: An Historico-Anthropological Essay* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); Roderick Phillips, *Putting Asunder: A History of Divorce in Western Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Note 7: For example, see David Warren Sabeau, *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700–1879* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Note 8: The prevalence of first-cousin marriage among elite Amsterdam burghers as well as among farmers and artisans in Neckarhausen raises questions about the class dimension of endogamous marriage. Julia Adams, *Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Sabeau, *Kinship in Neckarhausen*.

Note 9: Adams, *Ruling Families*; Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

Note 10: Thanks to Kerry Ward for a particularly fruitful conversation about the nonelite characteristics of many endogamously-marrying families of the Western Cape.

Note 11: C.P. van der Merwe, *Van der Merwe Gedenkboek*, 1952.

Note 12: Unless otherwise noted, marriages, marriage dates, and birth or baptism dates are those compiled in H&L and/or dV&P. The Heese and Lombard genealogies are more accurate and complete than de Villiers and Pama. In cases of significant discrepancies between H&L and dV&P, I have, where possible, verified the information through other sources. For example, dV&P show both Aletta Keyser and Maria Fick married to Hendrik van der Merwe Schalksz, rather than to his uncle, Oud Hendrik Willemsz the Heemraad. In terms of age, the younger Hendrik does seem a more likely partner for Aletta and Maria, but the women did, in fact, marry the elder Hendrik. Both men died in

1762, leaving widows and minor children. Their estate inventories clearly identify spouses and children that correspond to the H&L genealogy. CA:MOOC 8/10.32a, Estate Inventory of Hendrik van der Merwe (and Hester Pienaar), 21 Sept., 1762. The estate inventories in the MOOC collection are now available online at http://www.tanap.net/content/activities/documents/Orphan_Chamber-Cape_of_Good_Hope/index.htm

Note 13: CA: MOOC 8/10.38, Estate Inventory of Hendrik van der Merwe and Maria Tik, 8 Dec. 1762.

Note 14: Leonard Guelke and Robert C.-H. Shell point out that most remarriages happened within a year of a spouse's death; "An Early Colonial Landed Gentry: Land and Wealth in the Cape Colony 1682–1731," *Journal of Historical Geography* 9:3 (1983), 279.

Note 15: Catharina Margaretha married Albert Myburgh, son of a Cape Town burgher, himself a burgher in Stellenbosch, and the younger brother of Johannes Albertus, who established the Myburgh dynasty at Meerlust farm.

Note 16: For specifics on sex imbalance at the Cape, see Robert Ross, "The 'White' Population in the Eighteenth Century," in *Beyond the Pale: Essays on the History of Colonial South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), 127; and Robert C.-H. Shell, "Immigration: The Forgotten Factor in Cape Colonial Frontier Expansion, 1658–1817," *Safundi* 18 (Apr. 2005), 3. For documentation of settler men having illegitimate children with slaves, free blacks, and mixed-race women, see H.F. Heese, *Groep sonder grense*.

Note 17: Schalk Willem van der Merwe, born 1791, married Regina Jacoba Steyn, H&L.

Note 18: Cape settler patterns of naming children after parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles—depending on birth order—means there were frequently two or more individuals in the same family alive at once with the same name. Nicknames were common but typically do not appear in official documents such as loan farm records or the opgaaf. Designation as a father's son often appears, for example, Nicolaas van der Merwe Isaaksz. This convention is particularly helpful to differentiate cousins, such as Barend Burger Barendsz or Barend Burger Willemsz, discussed in Chapter 6. Unfortunately, these appellations were not applied consistently in eighteenth-century sources. Moreover some contemporary records as well as subsequent transcriptions sometimes confuse abbreviations of the *zoon* appellation with abbreviations of middle names, which further obscures individual identities

Note 19: Marriage partners of Hendrik's children: Myburgh, du Toit (both in Ross's 1983 list of 19 major vine-cultivating families), Hauman, van Heerden. Marriage partners of Hendrik's grandchildren: Le Roux, du Toit, du Plessis, de Villiers, Theron, and Minaar (all from vine-growing gentry families), and Bruwer, van der Vyver, Viljoen, Opperman, Steyn, Enslin, van der Merwe.

Note 20: At his death, each of Hendrik's children received RxD 631, 14 stuivers, and one slave. His two eldest surviving children (those he had with Aletta Keyser) received an additional RxD 1040:16 from the estate settlement agreed upon at their mother's death. CA: MOOC 8/10.38, Estate Inventory of Willem van der Merwe, 8 Dec. 1762.

Note 21: Guelke and Shell, "Early Colonial Landed Gentry"; Robert Ross, "The Rise of the Cape Gentry," *JSAS* 9:2 (Apr. 1983), 193–217; Wayne Dooling, "The Making of a Colonial Elite: Property, Family and Landed Stability in the Cape Colony, c. 1750–1834," *JSAS* 31:1 (Mar. 2005), 158–61.

Note 22: Hoge, "Personalia of Germans at the Cape, 1652–1808," *AYB* 9 (1946), 61.

Note 23: Shell, "Immigration," 4; Ross, "The Rise of the Cape Gentry," 127.

Note 24: Heese, *Groep sonder grense* (Robertson trans.), 55.

Note 25: The material and moral consequences of illegitimacy at the Cape in the eighteenth century remain underexplored. The pioneering study is Gerald Groenewald "Parents, Children and Illegitimacy in Dutch Colonial Cape Town, c. 1652–1795," unpublished paper, 2006. For illegitimacy in the nineteenth century, see V.C. Malherbe, "In *Onegt Verwekt*: Law, Custom and Illegitimacy in Cape Town, 1800–1840," *JSAS* 31:1 (2005), 163–85.

Note 26: Robert Ross, "The Development Spiral of the White Family and the Expansion of the Frontier," in *Beyond the Pale*, 139–44.

Note 27: On credit and mortgages, see Wayne Dooling, "Agrarian Transformation in the Western Districts of the Cape Colony, 1838–c.1900," (PhD diss., St. John's College, Cambridge, 1996).

Note 28: Dooling, "The Making of a Colonial Elite."

Note 29: ARA: VOC 10481, *OBP*, 1731 opgaaf; Leonard Guelke, Robert C.-H. Shell and Anthony Whyte, compilers, "The de la Fontaine Report," (New Haven: Opgaaf Project, 1990). CA: MOOC 9/8.20, Estate Inventory of Albert Meijberg, 11 Feb. 1756; Ross, "The Rise of the Cape Gentry," 207.

Note 30: CA: MOOC 8/5.52, Estate Inventory of Jan Cloete, 20 Mar. 1732.

Note 31: CA: MOOC 8/2.89, Estate Inventory of Jacobus van As, 30 Nov. 1713.

Note 32: Ross, "The Rise of the Cape Gentry," 207. Their son Johannes Albertus bought Meerlust in 1757. The farm continues to produce wine and is still owned by Myburgh descendants.

Note 33: CA: MOOC 8/2.3, Estate Inventory of Barent Burger, 1 Oct. 1705.

Note 34: Hendrik's sister, Sophia van Rensburg, was David van der Merwe's second wife. Anna van der Merwe, Hendrik's wife, was a child of David's first marriage, thus Sophia's stepdaughter. Given that marriage conferred a degree of relationship close enough to warrant the prosecution of incest for sexual transgressions (ARA: VOC 4158, ff. 928–43, 1743. *OBP*, Notes on criminal inquiry against Landbouwer Willem van Wyk in case of incest with Jacoba Alida Campher), it seems reasonable to consider Anna van der Merwe as Hendrik van Rensburg's niece; see Phillips, *Putting Asunder*, 6 for proscribed degrees of consanguinity. Even if an actual familial relationship is disavowed in this case, the social relationship between the two families remains evident.

Note 35: Shell, "Immigration," 3–4.

Note 36: M. Boucher, *French-Speakers at the Cape in the First Hundred Years of Dutch East India Company rule: The European Background* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1981), 271. He asserts that the Prevot and des Pres families became close on the Cape-bound voyage.

Note 37: Heese, *Groep sonder grense* (Robertson trans.), 54.

Note 38: Susan Newton-King, "In Search of Notability: The Antecedents of David van der Merwe of the Koue Bokkeveld," *Collected Seminar Papers* (University of London, Institute for Commonwealth Studies), No. 48, *The Societies of Southern Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, vol. 20, p. 32; Newton-King, personal communication, 2 Nov. 2006.

Note 39: Pieter Coertzen, with Charles Fensham, *The Huguenots of South Africa 1688–1988*, (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1988), 84–85.

Note 40: The "gross free 'white' population" of the colony in 1700 was 1,245 people, including 418 men and 222 women, Ross, "The 'White' Population," 127. Heese calculates that there were only 268 free burghers in the Cape district, 164 in Stellenbosch, and 130 in Drakenstein in 1700, making his male population figures slightly higher than Ross's; Heese, *Groep Sonder Grense* (Robertson trans.), 30. Guelke and Shell tallied 567 census households at the Cape in 1705, "Early Colonial Landed Gentry," 265, 270. Presumably women would have headed some of those "census households," so the number should not be taken as a source of sex-differentiated population figures.

Note 41: Barend Burger's claims to the farm at Twee Jonge Gezellen, CA: RLR 6:19, 6 Feb. 1725. RLR 8:218, 19 Feb. 1729 (to 1731 per L. Guelke data); Willem and Andries Burger's claims to farms in the Twenty-four Rivers: CA: RLR 6:123, 16 Apr. 1727 to 30 Apr., 1728; RLR 3:308, to 15 Nov. 1717, RLR 4:24, 15 Nov. 1717 to 16 Nov. 1718, RLR 4:106, 16 Nov. 1718 to 20 Nov. 1719; RLR 4:174, 20 Nov. 1719 to 20 Nov. 1720; RLR 5:18, 20 Nov. 1720 to 17 Nov. 1721, RLR 8:148, 25 Nov. 1728 to 25 Nov. 1730; RLR 8:237, 30 Mar. 1729 to 30 Mar. 1731 (per L. Guelke data).

Leonard Guelke graciously shared his compilation of RLR data with me, allowing me to cross-check my own archival references and to easily search and sort voluminous loan farm records. I am grateful for his generosity with raw data and for his published scholarly interpretations of colonial land claims and frontier farming life.

Note 42: Patricia Romero, "Some Aspects of Family and Social History Among the French Huguenot Refugees at the Cape," *Historia* 48:2 (Nov. 2003), passim, and esp. 45.

Note 43: Women also anchored extended families in Batavia; Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*, 71–77. Sabean similarly argues for the importance of women in anchoring kin networks in early-modern Germany, *Kinship in Neckarhausen*, 379–97.

Note 44: Goody, *The European Family*, 27–30.

Note 45: Goody, *The European Family*, 11.

Note 46: ". . . the Ecclesiastical impediments of consanguinity and affinity . . ." Phillips, *Putting Asunder*, 7.

Note 47: Patricia Romero, "Encounter at the Cape: French Huguenots, the Khoi, and Other People of Color," *JCCH* 5:1 (2004), http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v005/5.1romero.html.

Note 48: Romero, "Some Aspects of Family History," 32.

Note 49: Boucher, *French Speakers at the Cape*.

Note 50: Romero, "Some Aspects of Family History," 47.

Note 51: My assessment comes from comparing Romero's marriage statistics among nine Huguenot families with my own work on frontier-based families. This initial impression certainly warrants further specific comparisons. The existing literature is contradictory. Heese asserts, "Most [Huguenots] arrived as family groups and the chances of unions with other cultural groups were, to begin with, minimal." (*Groupe*, Robertson trans, 53). This statement puts him at odds with Shell's demographic study, "Immigration," 3–4. Moreover, numerous marriages by Huguenot arrivals and their Cape-born children also seem to challenge this assumption. See Romero, "Some Aspects of Family History," 46.

Note 52: Thera Wijsenbeek usefully considers other markers of community identity such as education, separate worship, and material culture in "Identity Lost: Huguenot Refugees in the Republic and its Former Colonies in North America and South Africa, 1650-1750: A Comparison," in *Contingent Lives: Social Identity and Material Culture in the VOC World*, ed. Nigel Worden, 91-109 (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2007), though I am not convinced by the portions of her argument that rely on the absence of recognizably "French" pieces of material culture at the Cape.

Note 53: Romero, "Some Aspects of Family History;" Boucher, *French Speakers at the Cape*; Heese, *Groupe* (Robertson trans.), 53.

Note 54: See Philips, "Putting Asunder," 355–57 for a discussion of changing marriage considerations in Europe, especially in the eighteenth century.