Forging a reputation: artisan honour and the Cape Town blacksmith strike of 1752

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In August 1752 two spades went missing from the VOC forge in Cape Town. As a result of this seemingly trivial event, "grumbles, not so very different from mutiny, were kindled which finally burst into full flame so that the whole forge had to be closed for several days."[1] Taking place only four months after the centenary celebrations of Van Riebeeck's landing, at which the Company congratulated itself on the harmony and prosperity of the colony, this "mutiny" was considered threatening enough to involve the direct intervention of the Governor and the criminal trial of the striking blacksmiths.

The decision to prosecute the strikers was fortuitous for the historian, if not for the condemned, since the interrogations and prosecution records of some 280 pages provide rich evidence about Company artisans, a group almost completely neglected in Cape historiography (and indeed in VOC historiography as a whole).[2] The nature of the evidence means that I have adopted an event-driven micronarrative, based on these archival traces. Evidence from court records are, in the words of the German historian Lyndal Roper, "manifestly not a sort of early modern version of the oral history interview - conducted by a rather less sympathetic interrogator equipped with thumbscrews instead of a tape recorder."[3] The details of everyday life are not always clear - there is, for instance, frustratingly little information on the precise living and working conditions within the Company forge. Such matters interest us, but were of no concern to the court. Words, however, were of importance to it. As in Europe, the artisans believed in the power of words and employed them as tools in their struggles, while the

1. *murmureeringe, niet zeer veel van muiterij differeereende ontvonkt en eijndelijk in de volle vlam soodanig uitgeborsten is, dat ook selfs gemelde smitswinkel voor een paar dagen moeten geslooten blijven*. The evidence for this case is drawn primarily from the Government (Cape) Archives (CA), CJ 360, Case no.17, f.371-510. Copies of some of this documentation were sent to the Netherlands and are filed in the Nationaal Archief (NA), The Hague in VOC 4190, f.1411-1511. This quotation is from the Eijsch ende Conclusie, 9 November 1752, f.373v. Thanks to Teun Baartman and the Cape Town History Project at the University of Cape Town, whose database of Council of Justice cases first drew my attention to the forge strike, to David Lowe, Robert Ross, John Iliffe and Ruth Watson for recommending and obtaining material on artisans and honour in early modern Europe, and to Andrew Bank, Lalou Meltzer, Susan Newton-King, Karel Schoeman, Antonia Malan, Primesh Lalu, Leslie Witz and Gerald Groenewald for helpful comments on the first draft, which was written for 'The VOC, Famous and Notorious: Two Hundred Years in Perspective' International Conference, Stellenbosch, 3-5 April 2002.
2. Artisans receive short shrift in most general accounts of the VOC. A notable exception is E.Opper, 'Dutch East India Company artisans in the early eighteenth century' (Ph.D thesis, Indiana University, 1985), although this unpublished thesis has received little attention, and some material in the better-known F.Lequin, *Het personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Azie in de 18de eeuw, meer in bijzonder in de vestiging Bengalen*, 2 vols., (Leiden, 1982). Both works are based on statistical material drawn from the muster rolls and *scheepssoldijboeken* in the Nationaal Archief.
3. L.Roper, 'Will and honour: sex, words and power in Augsburg criminal trials' in L.Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: witchcraft, sexuality and religion in early modern Europe* (London and New York, 1994), 55. Physical torture was not used in this case, but the circumstances in which the evidence was given was nonetheless both intimidating and coercive.

Company saw these words as acts of sedition. As a result the statements I have used were carefully recorded.[4] As many recent historians have emphasized, this sort of evidence is vital in trying to better understand the *mentalité* of people in the past.[5] It reveals to us deep-felt and instinctive beliefs which were usually too obvious to contemporaries to openly express. In disputes of this kind, however, such beliefs came to the fore. It is by examining what people thought had happened and why, rather than any objective "truth", that we are able to penetrate into their mental world. This case provides a moment, however fleeting, in which VOC blacksmiths revealed something of how they viewed themselves and their world. By drawing on the insights of recent rich culturalist studies of artisans in early modern Europe, we can then examine the ways in which these attitudes were transferred to the employees of a trading company in a distant colony. In particular, the case involved a major dispute over issues of status, reputation and the maintenance of personal honour.

The main events of the dispute can be baldly outlined. They centre around the Company forge, located in the *ambagtsquartier*, a building close to the shoreline where the modern railway station now stands.[6] On discovering that the spades were missing on a Friday morning in early August, the *baas smit* Jan Hendrik Krieger assumed that they had been stolen by one of the twenty smiths who worked under him. When all denied guilt, he ordered one of their number, Jan Martin Gebel who acted as "*paap*" or informal paymaster,[7] to search their *kists* [chests], without result.[8] Frustrated, Krieger then announced that their daily hour of free time would be withdrawn until someone owned up to the theft. After the weekend, when Krieger refused to relent on this, the smiths refused to go to work. Krieger then called in the *fabriekmeester* (the head of all the Company workshops), Kapitein ter Zee Hendrik de Ruijter, who backed Krieger and threatened the smiths with physical punishment and a reporting to the Governor. In response they went themselves directly to Governor Rijk Tulbagh at the Castle to

4. On artisan belief in the power of words, see J.Farr, *Hands of honour: artisans and their world in Dijon, 1550-1650* (Ithaca and London, 1988), 160.
5. For comments on the use of court evidence in early modern Dutch honour cases see Pieter Spierenburg, 'Knife fighting and popular codes of honour in early modern Amsterdam' in P.Spierenburg, ed., *Men and violence: gender, honour and rituals in modern Europe and America* (Ohio, 1998), 104-6. W.de Blécourt, '*"Schelm, hoer en canaille": beledigingen in achttiende-eeuws Kolderveen', Volkskundig Bulletin: Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Cultuurwetenschap*, vol. 18(3), 1992, 389-414 stresses the importance of detailed biographical context for understanding Dutch insult cases that were brought to court.
6. I am grateful to Lalou Meltzer and Susan Newton-King for helping me to locate the forge. At some point between 1725 and the early 1730s, when the Company workshops and forge were located in the Castle (G.J.Erasmus, 'Die geskiedenis van die bedryfslewe aan die Kaap, 1652 tot 1795', (Ph.D thesis, University of the Orange Free State, 1986), 178; G.C. de Wet, *Resolusies van die Politieke Raad, Deel 7* (Suid-Afrikaanse Argiefstukke, Kaap No. VII, Johannesburg, 1971), 189-90; Otto Mentzel, *A geographical and topographical description of the Cape of Good Hope*, Part One. Trans. by H J Mandelbrote (Van Riebeeck Society: Cape Town, 1921) 105) and the date of this case, they were moved to new premises for the location of which see the plan of Cape Town in 1767 in Mentzel, *Description*, Part One, 86 [No.19].
7. Gebel is identified as the "*paap*" in the records. I was initially intrigued by the presence of a closet Catholic priest in the Company forge ("*paap*" being translated as "een katholieke priester" in Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, *VOC-Glossarium: verklaringen van termen, verzameld uit de Rijks Geschiedkundige publicatiën die betrekking hebben op de VOC* (The Hague, 2000, 84), until rather disappointingly I discovered in Otto Mentzel, *A geographical and topographical description of the Cape of Good Hope*, Part Two. Trans. by H J Mandelbrote (Van Riebeeck Society: Cape Town, 1925), 64 that the nickname "pape" was used for a trusted employee who collected and distributed the *kostgeld* payments among the Company workers, a name used because "he formerly used to read the morning prayers in barracks; this practice has been discontinued because of unseemly ribaldry." Gebel was actually "van de gereformeerde religie", CA, CJ 360, f.441r.
8. As one of the smiths admitted, Krieger was legally entitled to do this as the *baas*. The artisans had little rights of privacy, CA, CJ 360, f.431v.

complain about their unjust treatment. Tulbagh assured them that he respected them as honest men but demanded that they return to work. This they did, but only for a short time. An argument soon flared between Krieger and Godfried Malucko, one of the leading members of the delegation to the Castle, when Krieger accused Malucko of breaking tools and of theft. De Ruijter was again brought in to arbitrate but only succeeded in worsening matters so that Malucko walked off the job, an action which led to his demotion to the rank of *matroos* [sailor]. The other smiths then refused to continue working until Malucko was reinstated and the whole forge was closed down for several days. Matters were only restored to normal when Krieger was replaced as *baas smit* by Hendrik Scheffer, a free burgher who had previously worked for the Company.[9] We do not know what happened to the spades.[10]

"We just want to get our honourable names back"[11]

As far as the Company was concerned, these events represented one thing - a "mutiny" during which the forge workers had challenged its authority and thus contravened the terms of the *artikulbrief* contracts they had signed on entering Company service.[12] The VOC was a highly regimented and hierarchical organisation and this was clearly reflected in the circumstances under which the forge operated. The smiths were expected to work under strict rules. Their hours were fixed, with work beginning at 7am and ending at 6pm (at least in the winter months in which this case took place), set times for breaks marked by the ringing of bells and penalties for absence. A time discipline thus existed in the *ambagtsquartier* of the sort usually associated with a later industrial era. The Company was, like other large-scale employers in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century northern Europe, attempting to impose regulation on to the world of artisans and craftsmen which in Europe was notoriously independent.[13] As Opper has pointed out, the artisans worked under a labour hierarchy of bosses and foremen which "presaged modern factory labor forces."[14] The levels of this hierarchy are clearly demarcated in this case, with "Paap" Gebel as a link man between the workers and Krieger, the *baas smit*.[15] When Krieger's authority

9. It seems that Scheffer had recently established himself as a burgher and in the previous year he had obtained an erf for a house in newly-established blocks in Cape Town, CA, C 1118, Requesten, No.68, ff.175-6, no date [1751]. That the forge was back in operation by early September is apparent from the work undertaken to replace the unserviceable gun carriages and wheels on the Castle walls, CA, VC 382, ff.132-5, Resolusie of 5 September 1752.
10. As will become apparent, the fate of the spades was not the issue in the case. Their disappearance was merely the catalyst for other events.
11. *wij willen niets anders dan om onse eerlijke naam weederom te hebben* CA, CJ 360, f.475v.
12. The oath taken by Company artisans included the statement that "*Wij beloven en sweren, dat wij ons in onse respective ampten en bedieningen, wel en na behooren zullen dragen en quijten, mitsgaders 't geene ons bij d'Heeren Bewindhebberen van de Oost Indische Compagniem neffens die over ons verder te zeggen, of te gebieden hebben, zal worden belast en bevolen*…", NA, VOC 4693, f.17.
13. J.Farr, *Artisans in Europe, 1300-1914* (Cambridge, 2000), esp p.20 and ch.5. For Dutch examples, see A.J.Deurloo, 'Biltjes en klouwers: een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der Amsterdamse scheepsbouw, in het bijzonder in de tweede helft der achttiende eeuw', *Economisch- en Sociaal-Historisch Jaarboek*, vol. 34, 1971 and R.Unger, *Dutch shipbuilding before 1800* (Assen and Amsterdam, 1978), especially 95-100.
14. Opper, 'Dutch East India Company artisans', 107.
15. Though Gebel did not hold a higher rank in terms of his salary, which was the same as the other smiths at 14 fl. a month. In 1753 he was sent to Batavia in the rank of an ordinary soldier, NA, VOC 14 206, f.224. On the salary ranking of the forge, see the discussion below.

broke down the *fabriekmeester* de Ruijter, was called in. When that failed the Governor himself intervened.

What was so disturbing to the authorities were the ways in which this hierarchy of order was challenged. Much emphasis in the interrogations was placed on the lack of due deference by the smiths "in a case of very grave insolence and extreme impertinence committed against Heer Hendrik de Ruijter, placed as *fabriek* over them, as well as an absolute refusal to work under the command of their *baas* Jan Hendrik Kriger."[16] This was marked by their actions - the initial refusal to work, going to de Ruijter over Krieger's head and then appealing to the Governor over the authority of de Ruijter, as well as Malucko's desertion and the subsequent strike, all of which threatened hierarchical order. De Ruijter's outraged response to their appeal for action against Krieger was "what do you want: must the *baas* fall to his knees in front of you?"[17]

Equally seditious in the eyes of the authorities were the very words used by the smiths. Faced with social superiors, the smiths resorted to verbal rather than physical violence.[18] When challenged by de Ruijter as to why they were so *oproerig* [rebellious] after Malucko's demotion, one of their number, Jacob Fee, replied that they rejected Krieger as their *baas* and that if he came into the workshop they would "knock him down and beat him up."[19] De Ruijter, stressing his rank as both the *fabriekmeester* and a *Kapitein* [20] asked if he realised to whom he was speaking, to which Fee replied, "we know full well who you are, you are not our blessed Lord."[21] Another smith, Anthonij van den Steen, "having pulled his hat over his eyes," then accosted de Ruijter with the words "God damn it, I dare speak to the Governor the same way as you, even if he was a king," and declared that, "you have no right to strike a smith."[22] De Ruijter's response to these affronts to his status and authority was to demand if "*gij luijden*" (a perjorative phrase broadly equivalent to "you people" in modern South African usage) intended returning to work "or if they wanted to be *baas* themselves," to which van den Steen replied "with shameless swear words that he didn't want to be a

16. *in cas van gepleegde seer groove assurantien en hooggaande brutaliteijten aan hun over hun gestelde fabriek d'Heer Hendrik de Ruijter, mitsgaders wijders volstreckte wijgering van onder 't commando van hun baas Jan Hendrik Krieger voortaan te willen werken,* CA, CJ 34, ff.85-6 and CJ 360, f.371v.
17. *wat wilt gij dan: sal dan de baas voor jou op de knie vallen?,* CA, CJ 360, f.417r
18. The tactic of verbal attack by labourers and ordinary artisans against their superiors, especially master craftsmen, is noted by T.Brennan, *Public drinking and popular culture in eighteenth-century Paris* (Princeton, 1988), 65-6.
19. *[hem] needer smijten en capot slaan,* CA CJ 360, f. 376v. and 408v. It is perhaps significant that this violent threat and the subsequent exchange with de Rujter was made by Fee, who was one of the youngest and newest recruits to the forge. In the trial the statements were attributed to him by de Ruijter and not confessed by Fee himself. Presumably the newcomer had learnt by then the danger of such "sedition". On the uncertain balance between verbal and physical violence by young men in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, see Spierenburg, 'Knife fighting and popular codes of honour'.
20. de Ruijter appears to have been a man of some substance. He owned a small boat (Nicolas Louis de la Caille, *Travels at the Cape*, 1751-53. Trans. by R.Raven-Hart (Cape Town and Rotterdam, 1976), 24), and the goods he auctioned when he left the Cape in 1754 included leather chairs and cushions, Dutch paintings, an English writing desk and a grandfather clock - signs of a lifestyle markedly different from that of the forge employees, CA, CJ 3037, ff.117-19 Inventory of Hendrick de Ruijter made at time of his repatriation, 22 April 1754.
21. *wij weeten wel wie ghij sijt, ghij sijt onzen lieven Heer niet*, CA, CJ 360, f.408v.. There may be a sense of irony in these words of Fee; "onze lieve Heer" was a common expression of piety in Reformed tradition to refer to God, but was also used as a swear word expressing irritation or frustration, P.G.J. van Sterkenburg, *Vloeken: een cultuurbepaalde reactie op woede, irritatie en frustratie* (2nd. edition, The Hague, 2001), 372-3.
22. *God doem mij ik durf wel spreeken voor de gouverneur soo wel as ghij, al was 't voor een koning*; and *ghij moogt geen smit slaan,* CA, CJ 360, f.409 r-v. Steen was also a newcomer to the Cape, although a married man and older than Fee. He was recruited in the rank of a corporal (NA, VOC 13 052, f.33) rather than ordinary soldier, and seems to have been particularly offended at being treated as a social inferior by de Ruijter.

baas or to be set above him and that he was still Van den Steen wherever in the world he might be."[23] At which de Ruijter, at such "obstinacy and stubbornness of the men" and the "clearly seen and heard excessive insolence and vituperousness of some of them," closed the workshop and left.[24]

This exchange marks a rejection of Company hierarchy and authority at many levels. The men have refused to work. Moreover they verbally abuse de Ruijter, a man of far higher social rank than themselves, and they threaten to physically attack Krieger, their appointed *baas*, if he ventures into the workshop. Van den Steen, at least, claimed to be of equal status with his superiors and by accosting de Ruijter with his hat pulled over his eyes, he was also challenging the conventions of deference in dress and gesture, although in later cross-examination he attempted to defend himself by claiming that he had taken his hat off before speaking.[25]

Robert Ross has stressed the difficulty of knowing how far the VOC's concept of hierarchy was accepted by those at the lower ends of the Cape social order. From the above evidence it might seem apparent that it was not - at least not by those working in the forge in 1752. However the smiths steadfastly denied that they were rebelling against the Company and its power structure. Their call on the Governor was, after all, an appeal to the ultimate authority, not a rejection of it.[27] Their consistent defence, both at the time and at their trial several months later, was that Krieger "had accused them of being thieves over two spades that had gone missing; and that they wanted their good name back, not that they refused to do the Company's work."[28] By accusing them unjustly of theft, and thus "stealing" their good names, first Krieger and then de Ruijter had forfeited their right to respect and obedience and only if their reputations were restored would the smiths return to work.[29]

The importance of having and maintaining honour amongst the elite sectors of early Cape colonial society has recently been recognised by several historians.[30] It is less clear how such notions applied to lesser-ranking inhabi-

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23. *onbeschaamde vloek woorden dat ook geen baas wilde weesen of hem de voet ligten dewijl 't hem [van den Steen] eevenveel was, waar hij in de wereld mogte zijn*, CA, CJ 360, f.377v.
24. *onwilligheid en obstinatie van 't volk* and *klaar geziene en gehoorde excorbitante brutaliteijten en vilipendien van sommige onder hem*, CA, CJ 360, f. 377v.
25. CA, CJ 360, f.480v [Q57]. On the significance of covering the head as a marker of status see J.Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour' in *International Encylopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 6 (New York, 1968), 505. Doffing one's hat in the presence of others was a marker of social respect, D.Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and community in Paris, 1740-90* (Cambridge, 1986), 43. According to the traveller Nicolaas de Graaff, VOC sailors had to stand "like a lot of subservient slaves with hat in hand by the gangway whenever the skipper or another officer leaves or returns to the ship" (cited in C.R.Boxer, *The Dutch seaborne empire, 1600-1800* (London, 1965), 70).
26. R.Ross, *Status and respectability in the Cape Colony, 1750-1870: a tragedy of manners* (Cambridge, 1999), 38-9. Ross is referring here to slaves but the point is equally valid for those employees on the lower ranks of the Company's hierarchy.
27. On the appeal to higher authorities in case of dissatisfaction with community resolution of honour issues, see especially M-T.Leuker, 'Schelmen, hoeren, eerdieven en lastertongen: smaad en belediging in zeventiende-eeuwse kluchten en blijspelen', *Volkskundig Bulletin: Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Cultuurwetenschap*, vol. 18(3), 1992, 305-6 and Garrioch, *Neighbourhood*, 45-7.
28. *hun voor dieven had gescholden, over twee graaven die absent geraakt waaren; en dat se hun eerlijken naam weederom hebben wilden, egter 'S Comp werk niet weijgerden*, CA, CJ 360, f.416r.
29. CA, CJ 360, f.436r.
30. Most notably Ross, *Status and respectability*, ch.2; W.Dooling, *Law and community in a slave society: Stellenbosch district, South Africa, c.1760-1820* (Cape Town, 1992) and J.Mason, 'Hendrik Albertus and his ex-slave Mey', *Journal of African History*, vol. 31, 1990, 423-45 among Cape slave owners. See also K.McKenzie, 'Gender and honour in middle-class Cape Town: the making of colonial identities, 1828-1850', (D.Phil thesis, Oxford University, 1997), ch.4 and K.McKenzie, 'Of convicts and capitalists: honour and colonial commerce in 1830s Cape Town and Sydney', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 118, 2002, 199-222 for the colonial middle class of early British Cape Town.

tants or to those employed by the Company. While the importance of having a good reputation applied at all social levels, to claim honour was to claim status, although studies of early modern societies elsewhere have demonstrated that the boundary between reputation and honour was permeable and the terms by which honour was both constructed and threatened varied between different groups and over time and place.[31] The Dutch historian van de Pol has characterised early modern Amsterdam as belonging to a *schaamtecultuur* [culture of shame], where possession of honour was crucial not only to social reputation but also had legal and practical consequences: for instance, only those with *eer* [honour] had the right to avoid shameful punishments or could be considered as worthy of burgher status. Having a "good name" was thus of vital importance to all who wished to obtain social status and avoid marginalisation.[32] *Eer* was also gendered. In most societies, sexual infidelity was the major cause of dishonour for women. For men, dishonour could also be sexual (especially cuckolding) but was more usually related in northern Europe to dishonest work practice, disloyalty to one's fellow workers and mates, and financial irresponsibility (such as bankruptcy).[33] Theft epitomised all of these. In early modern Amsterdam "'*Dief*' ['Thief'] was one of the most shameful swear words; an accusation of theft was taken very seriously," could be grounds for defamation action, and was considered even worse than prostitution, the ultimate sexual shame.[34] And an attack on honour was described as *eerdieferij*, or *theft* of one's good name. In the words of a seventeenth-century Dutch play, "it is the greatest theft to deprive someone of his honour."[35]

European social historians have shown that sensitivity to honour was particularly highly developed amongst artisans in northern Europe, especially in the German-speaking territories. A specific form of artisan identity emerged from the late Middle Ages, often expressed through the organisation of guilds and journeymen associations and cemented by a common code of discipline and

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31. From a large literature on this topic, see especially F.Stewart, *Honour* (Chicago, 1994), esp. 130-1; B.Wyatt-Brown, *Southern honour: ethics and behaviour in the Old South* (Oxford, 1982), 14; L.Johnson and S.Lipsett-Rivera, eds., *The faces of honour: sex, shame and violence in colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque, 1998), 2, 6, 11-12; J.A.Sharpe, *Defamation and sexual slander in early modern England*, Borthwick Papers No. 28 (Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York, 1980); R.van Dülmen, *Kultur und Alltag in der frühen Neuzeit: Dorf und Stadt 16. - 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1992), 194-5; M.Dinges, 'Die Ehre als Thema der Stadtgeschichte', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, vol 16(4), 1989, 409-40.
32. L.van de Pol, *Het Amsterdams hoerdom: prostitutie in de seventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 1996), 67-84. Herman Roodenburg also describes early modern Amsterdam as possessing a "schaamtecultuur" rather than a "schuldcultuur": reputation was more significant to social standing than innocence or guilt of specific crimes, *Onder censuur: de kerklijke tucht in de gereformeerde gemeente van Amsterdam, 1578-1700* (Hilversum, 1990), 244.
33. A.Keunen, '"Ongaarne beticht en bevlekt": vrouwen, mannen en hun beledigingen voor de Correctionele Rechtbank te Amsterdam, 1811-1838', *Volkskundig Bulletin: Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Cultuurwetenschap*, vol 18(3), 1992, 415-31. In early modern Germany, "artisans saw the loss of male honour as analagous to the loss of a woman's virginity", K.Stuart, *Defiled trades and social outcasts: honour and ritual pollution in early modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1999), 194.
34. "'Dief' was een van de oneervolste scheldwoorden; een beschuldiging van diefstal werd zeer hoog opgenomen", van de Pol, *Amsterdams hoerdom*, 72.
35. "'t is de grootste dievery iemand in zijn eer te raecken." From Matheus Tengnagel, *Frik in 't Veur-huys* (1642), cited in van de Pol, *Amsterdams hoerdom*, 80. On the seriousness of theft accusations as threats to honour in seventeenth and eighteenth-century northern Europe, see also Roodenburg, *Onder censuur*, 247; Farr, *Hands of honour*, 163-4 and 179; Brennan, *Public drinking*, 29 and 70-1; Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and community in Paris*, 38-9. On the seriousness with which theft was viewed in VOC Batavia, see K.Ward, '"The bounds of bondage": forced migration from Batavia to the Cape of Good Hope during the Dutch East India Company era, c.1652-1795' (Ph.D thesis, University of Michigan, 2002), 217-18.

honour; "one of the strongest norms among the artisans was honour," according to historian James Farr.[36] The constant travelling of migrant journeymen made such a code important for being able to trust unknown fellow craftsmen. Moreover, German historians have emphasized how such codes of honour were a form of "symbolic capital" that could be drawn upon in conflicts with rival groups or with state authorities (such as city councils) who attempted to limit artisan independence.[37] By the eighteenth century, these concepts were being more severely challenged by moves to reduce craft regulations and free the market. In 1731 an Imperial Edict in the German lands attempted to regulate guild independence and to outlaw rituals by artisans and journeymen that maintained *Ehre* (honour) codes and practices.[38] Many artisans defiantly asserted themselves against these assaults and were highly sensitive to perceived dishonouring. As a result, strikes and conflicts increased markedly. In 1748, Amsterdam artisans demanded the right to organize themselves into guilds with membership defined by adherence to honourable practice and intended to exclude alien outsiders, in imitation of similar demands in the towns of northern and central German-speaking territories.[40]

This then was the context with which the Cape Town blacksmiths were familiar. Fourteen of the twenty men in the forge had been recruited into the VOC in Amsterdam during or in the couple of years after the 1748 artisan conflicts.[41] More significantly, fifteen originated from German-speaking regions where artisan and journeymen codes of honour were being so strongly asserted (of the others one was from Bruges, two from the Netherlands and two were Cape-born).[42] The prevalence of recruits from the German territories[43] in the

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36. Farr, *Hands of honour*, 150. See also Farr, *Artisans in Europe*; Stuart, *Defiled trades*, ch.7; H-U.Thamer, 'On the use and abuse of handicraft: journeyman culture and enlightened public opinion in 18th and 19th century Germany' in S.Kaplan, ed., *Understanding popular culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century* (Berlin, New York and Amsterdam, 1984), 275-300; M.Wiesner, 'Wandervogels and women: journeymen's concepts of masculinity in early modern Germany', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 24, 1991, 767-82.
37. A.Grießinger, *Das symbolische Kapital der Ehre: Streikbewegungen und kollektives Bewußtsein deutscher Handwerksgesellen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 1981).
38. M.Walker, *German home towns: community, state and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca and London, 1971), 93-5.
39. It has been estimated that 96 out of 541 identified strikes in eighteenth-century Germany were caused by affronts to artisan concepts of honour, R.Reith, A.Grießinger and P.Eggers, *Streikbewegungen deutscher Handwerkgesellen im 18. Jahrhundert: Materialien zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte des städtischen Handwerks, 1700-1806* (Göttingen, 1992), 52-3. Grießinger, *Symbolische Kapital der Ehre* discusses the organised nature of these conflicts, drawing on the traditions of artisan codes. See also F.Zunkel, 'Ehre' in O.Brunner, W.Conze and R.Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Band 2 (Stuttgart, 1975), 44-5 and R.Evans, *Rituals of retribution: capital punishment in Germany, 1600-1987* (Oxford, 1996), 195. Stuart, *Defiled trades*, 16-17 and ch.8 argues that artisan honour was more rigidly asserted in the eighteenth century than earlier and that it was more innovative in form than Grießinger suggests.
40. M.Prak, 'Civil disturbances and the urban middle class in the Dutch Republic', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, vol. 15(2), 1989, 165-73.
41. Cape muster roll for 1752, NA, ARA 5200, f.112-13. Two were recruited in Zeeland and Rotterdam, two came from the Cape and two were recruited in Amsterdam before 1748.
42. The names as listed in the Eijsch are: Anthonij van den Steen van Brugge, Jacob Fee van Koblentz, Godfried Malucko van Breslau, Jan Jost Steenberg van Hessen, Jan Christoffel Thiele van Nieuwstad, Jan Rudolf Thim van Hamburg, Jan Martin Gebel van Hessen Kassel, Anthonij van Rooijen van Kaap de Goede Hoop, Jurgen Swart van Holstein, Jacobus van der Helling van Amsterdam, Melchior Rus van Hessen, Bernard van d Heem van Utrecht, Jan Christoffel Brotruk van Zwartsenburg, Gerrit Adriaansz. van Cabo de Goede Hoop, Wiebe Gerrit Kreessenburg van Oost Vriesland, Otto Rickers van Holstein, Jan Christian Visser van Grooten Gaarts, Georg Scholts van Kerslien, Jan Frederick Poolman van Alterna, and Martin Lieve Zernicko van Altbrandenburg, CA, CJ 360, f.371r-v.
43. "Germany" and "German" are of course anachronisms in the mid-eighteenth century, although the terms are frequently used in historical work to refer to the regions and people which were later to become part of Germany and I will follow such practice here. "German-speaking" is also inaccurate since it implies the use of a common standardised language, which was far from the case. Speakers of northern Germanic languages and dialects (which of course included Dutch) could understand each other relatively well, and at the Cape Dutch forms were used as a lingua franca.

Cape Town *ambagtsquartier* in the mid-eighteenth century matches trends in the VOC as a whole. German recruits to the Company's service increased markedly in number between the 1720s and 1760s and many artisans, especially blacksmiths, were German in origin in other VOC posts such as Batavia and Ceylon.[44]

The Cape Town blacksmiths would thus have been well aware of the importance of artisan honour in Europe and sensitive to threats made to it by government authorities. Their outrage showed that they viewed themselves in this way and that they interpreted the accusations made against them accordingly. In fact examination of the personal circumstances of the forge workers shows that they were in a socially ambivalent position in their new colonial workplace. To be honourable was to be set above others. Honour was therefore particularly meaningful to those who wished to claim social status but whose rank was insecure.[45] Such was the case for the workers in the *ambagtsquartier* who held a position just above the ordinary *soldaten* and *matrozen* [soldiers and sailors] that formed the majority of the Company's employees and were considered to be *eerloos* [without honour],[46] but who were not viewed in the Cape with the same respect as were guild artisans in Europe.

The artisans were listed separately (together with their *bazen*) from the ordinary soldiers in the annual Cape muster rolls. In 1752, 109 employees out of an overall total of 1,563 were so designated, a figure which remained relatively constant throughout the eighteenth century.[47] There was a hierarchy in the forge, marked by differential wages. Seven workers, all of whom had only been

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44. Opper, 'Dutch East India Company artisans', 52 and 267. I estimate that of the 175 smiths listed in the 1752 muster roll for all the VOC stations at least 79, or just under half, were of German origin. The proportion may have been higher since I was unable to identify the precise geographical location of a number of the places of origin. In many of the Asian stations, such as those in Ceylon and Bengal, many locally-recruited men were used. This contrasts with only two local recruits in the Cape Town forge. The proportion of Germans at the Cape was thus higher than the other VOC settlements, NA VOC 5200. Jan Lucassen, *Migrant labour in Europe, 1600-1800: the drift to the North Sea* (London 1987), 156-7 explains increasing foreign rather than Dutch employment in the VOC in terms of greater economic prosperity in the Netherlands which obviated the need to work for the Company. Roelof van Gelder, *Het Oost-Indisch avontuur: Duitsers in dienst van de VOC* (Nijmegen, 1997), 113-19 highlights poverty and the desire to avoid military service, but also stresses the lure of adventure and the traditions of wandering by young artisans, as a context for German recruitment. There was a long tradition of seasonal and artisan labour migration from Germany to Amsterdam. For example 40% of the blacksmith immigrants in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century were German, A.Knotter, and L.van Zanden, 'Immigratie en arbeidsmarkt te Amsterdam in de 17e eeuw', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, vol. 13(4), 1987, 414. Ad Knotter, 'Vreemdelingen in Amsterdam in de 17de eeuw: groepsvorming, arbeid en ondernemerschap', *Historisch Tijdschrift Holland*, vol. 27, 1995, 219-35 identifies the regions of origin while Jan Lucassen, 'Tijdelijke of permanente vestiging van Duitsers in Holland', *Historisch Tijdschrift Holland*, vol. 27, 1995, 254-62 and Jaap Vogel, 'Ambachtslieden, trekarbeiders en handelaars: migrante in de 18de eeuwse Republiek', *Spiegel Historiael*, vol. 37(7-8), 2002, 306-11 place German labour migration into the broader context of the Netherlands as a whole and point to the growing local opposition to foreign workers when the Dutch economy slowed down in the eighteenth century. The relative shortage of jobs in eighteenth-century Holland accounts for the recruitment of German workers into the VOC.
45. A.Blok, 'Eer en de fysieke persoon', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, vol. 18, 1980, 212; McKenzie, 'Gender and honour', 185.
46. At least this was the case in Amsterdam where VOC soldiers and sailors had particularly dishonourable reputations among their social superiors, although of course they were not without concepts of honour themselves, van de Pol, *Amsterdams hoerdom*, 83. On the boundary between skilled artisans - including blacksmiths - and unskilled labourers in Europe, see especially W.Sewell, *Work and revolution in France: the language of labor from the old regime to 1848.* (Cambridge, 1980), 21-24. In contrast to the soldiers and sailors, the smiths would have seen themselves as "artists", the origin of the word "artisan".
47. This included 22 in the *smitswinkel* (including Krieger and one smith - Jan Adriaan de Nikker van de Caab - who had left the forge before the strike broke out), 36 "house carpenters", 14 "ship carpenters", 26 bricklayers and 11 in the cooper's workshop. There were also a handful of glass makers and tailors listed under "diverse services" and 10 wagon makers. 175 men were listed as smiths in the VOC as a whole in the 1752 muster roll. Only Batavia and Colombo had larger artisan workshops than the Cape, NA VOC 5200. Opper estimates that there were some 2,000 designated artisans in the VOC at this time, 'Dutch East India Company artisans', 8-11.

recruited in the year of the dispute, earned the same as the basic soldier's wage of 9 fl., and were presumably treated as apprentices who were aiming for promotion.[48] Eleven, including the strike ringleaders, qualified for the higher monthly amount of 14 fl., while Jurgen Swart van Holstein earnt 18 fl., perhaps because he had been working at the Cape for almost ten years and must therefore have taken out an additional contract.[49] *Baas smit* Krieger earned 20 fl. and had a place (albeit right at the back) in formal Company processions, a marker of status.[50] Yet even his salary and rank remained well below that of the senior *gequalificeerde* employees, such as de Ruijter who earned 100 fl. and held the high rank of "Sea Captain".

The forge workers thus held a precarious social position. Only one of them, Martin Zernicko, had been recruited in the Netherlands as a specialist artisan.[51] The remainder were initially taken on in the rank of soldiers, were presumably only sent to the forge when there was a vacancy or special need and were only listed as smiths in the muster rolls once they had proved themselves.[52] A few appear to have been so engaged from the start, doubtless because they already had some knowledge of the work involved. This included all three of the strike ringleaders, which strongly suggests that they were skilled forge workers before they arrived at the Cape .[53] But others remained at a soldier's wage until they could learn, or demonstrate that they already knew, the required skills, which in each case of the 1752 workers had taken place by the following year when their pay was increased to 14 fl.[54] The two Cape recruits, Anthonij van Rooijen and Gerit Andersz. were listed on their engagement as "junior smith" and "junior cooper" respectively, and it took longer for them to be promoted to the rank of full smith.[55] Presumably none of the other forge workers could claim to be professional blacksmiths on recruitment. The Company was wary of those who claimed skills that they did not possess and if found to be

48. On the low level of soldier wages in the VOC, see D.de Iongh, *Het krijgswezen onder de Oostindische Compagnie* (The Hague, 1950), 84. Wages had only increased by 1 fl. to 9 fl. as month since 1607 for ordinary soldiers. Corporals received 12 fl.
49. See de Iongh, *Het krigswezen*, 84 on increased wages for second contracts.
50. Krieger had arrived in 1747 in the rank of *bosschieter* (arquebusier). He worked as a smith for two years before being promoted to *baas* in November 1749, NA, VOC 14 752, f.80 and CA, C 1119, Requesten, 83, f.182-3. See also J.Hoge, 'Personalia of the Germans at the Cape, 1652-1806', *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis*, vol. 9, 1946, 224. On processions, see Ross, *Status and respectability*, 23; CA, A 2276, file 321.
51. He was recruited as a *geelgieter* (brass-founder), NA, VOC 6279, f.115.
52. Anthonij van der Steen and Godfried Malucko were recruited into the slightly higher rank of corporal, while Jacobus van der Helling was an adelborst: NA, VOC 13 052, f. 33; VOC 6265, f.24; VOC 6081, f. 140 and 144. The rest were listed as ordinary soldiers, except Jan Poolman who was engaged as a sailor, NA VOC 5200, f.113. NA VOC 5200, f.113.
53. Anthonij van den Steen arrived in January 1752 aboard *Snoek*, NA, VOC 13 052, f.33 and J.R.Bruijn, F.S.Gaastra and I.Schöffer, *Dutch-Asiatic shipping in the 17th and 18th centuries*, Vol. II (The Hague, 1979), 536; Jacob Fee in July 1751 on *Eendracht*, NA, VOC 6272, f.283 and Bruijn, *Dutch-Asiatic shipping*, Vol. II, 532 and Godfried Malucko in April 1751 on *Ruyskestein*, NA, VOC 6265, f.24 and Bruijn, *Dutch-Asiatic shipping*, Vol. II, 530. Malucko was listed in the 1751 muster roll as a full smith with a wage of 14 fl, NA, VOC 5199, f.10-11 while van den Steen and Fee's first listings in the rolls were both as full smiths in 1752, NA, VOC 5200, f.112-13. For the recruitment of travelling journeymen into the VOC, see van Gelder, *Oost-Indisch avontuur*, 62-3.
54. NA, VOC 5201, f.8-9. We unfortunately lack any details of the kind of training the Cape Town blacksmiths received. In Europe artisan "skill" was seen as a social as much as an economic construct, Farr, *Artisans in Europe*, p. 282-7, although clearly the forge workers would have had to learn special skills. For the use of temporary and unskilled workers alongside specialists in forges in Europe, see Y.Lamy, 'Hommes de fer et élites au village dans la Dordogne protoindustrielle', *Cahiers d'histoire*, vol. 32(3-4), 1987, 279-80.
55. Both were still apprentices in 1753, NA, VOC 5201, f.8-9. Gerrit Andersz. became a fully-paid smith in 1755, NA, VOC 5203, f.160-1, while Anthonij van Rooijen disappeared from the Company's muster roll after 1754, possibly having failed to satisfy requirements.

inadequate to the job they were either returned home without pay or, in the later eighteenth century as recruitment became more difficult, were retained but demoted to the rank of *soldaat* or *matroos*.[56] Fewer than one in ten of the artisans in the VOC as a whole obtained promotion into higher ranks.[57] Among the smiths involved in the Cape Town strike, only two were promoted beyond the position of smith.[58]

Artisans were thus a distinct category in the VOC's hierarchy, but most of the workers in the Cape Town forge had only just raised themselves above the mass of the lower-ranking employees and rose no further in the Company's service. The precariousness of their position was evident in the fate of Wiebe Gerrit Kreessenburg van Oost Vriesland who was taken on as a soldier apprentice in the forge on his arrival in 1751 but ran away in 1753 "without leaving anything behind" while in debt to the tune of 323 fl.[59] With little prospect of promotion, few renewed their contracts beyond the first five years, a situation which led to a constant turnover in the forge. Two returned to Europe, although one died on the return journey, and two moved on to Batavia where one died and the other went missing.[60] A far more desirable possibility for those who did not have wives and families in Europe, was *vrijdom versoeken*, that is to leave the ranks of the Company and become a free burgher, when they could make a living as private blacksmiths.[61] This was the route taken by four of the strikers in 1752. Three of them obtained burgher status after marrying Cape Town women; the fourth married shortly after becoming a burgher. Two of them married sisters whose mother was a free black woman, an indicator of the permeability of the colour line in VOC Cape Town.[62] Burgher status and marriage were the only means by which Company employees could establish themselves

56. Opper, 'Dutch East India Company artisans', 35-42; van Gelder, *Oost-Indisch avontuur*, 151; NA, VOC 4952, Instructie Boek, No.36, 18 October 1765. Lequin, *Het personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Azie*, 42-3.
57. Opper, 'Dutch East India Company artisans', 85,107.
58. Jurgen Swart van Holstein became *baassmit* at the Cape in 1760-2, Hoge, 'Personalia of the Germans at the Cape', 385 and Otto Rickers van Holstein followed in 1763-74, after he had served one term as a smith, returned to Europe and re-enlisted, NA, VOC 6275, f.306 and VOC 14 779, f.265.
59. NA, VOC 6262, f. 175.
60. Georg Scholts returned permanently to Europe in 1758 and was the only member of the 1752 forge to do so, NA, VOC 6288, f.289. Martin Zernicko embarked for Europe in 1757 but died on the way, NA, VOC 6279, f.115. Jan Gebel went to Batavia in 1753 and died in the Company hospital several months later, NA, VOC 14 206, f.224, while Bernard van der Heem transferred to Batavia in 1753 and then went missing in 1755, NA, VOC 6271, f.311. Opper, 'Dutch East India Company artisans', 90 claims that most VOC artisans returned to Europe after their initial contract period, but the possibilities either of obtaining burgher status or of transfer to the East made the Cape an exception to this general pattern.
61. A common request, according to the smiths, CA, CJ 360, f.416v. Those who stayed in Company employ had been married in Europe and so would not have been eligible for burgher status at the Cape. There were three burgher blacksmiths in Cape Town in 1731, all of them married, NA, Collectie Radermacher 507. Company smiths had been made free burghers as early as 1657 in order make wagons and farm equipment for the settler farmers, Erasmus, 'Geskiedenis van die bedryfslewe', 179.
62. Jan Steenberg van Hessen who had married Christina de Vries, daughter of Flora van de Kaap in 1751, became a burgher in 1753 and after his wife's death married Johanna Christina van der Swyn, daughter of Rosalina van Bengal (Hoge, 'Personalia of the Germans at the Cape', 409, H.C.V.Leibbrandt, *Precis of the archives of the Cape of Good Hope: Requesten (Memorials), 1715-1806*, 5 vols. (Cape Town and London, 1905-89), 1074i). Jan Frederick Poolman of Alterna married Cornelia de Vries, also daughter of Flora van de Kaap [and presumably Christina de Vries's sister] in 1755 and became a burgher in 1756 (Hoge, 'Personalia of the Germans at the Cape', 317, Leibbrandt, *Precis*, 899b). Jan Thim also became a burgher in 1753 and worked as a *ratelwagt* in Cape Town (Hoge, 'Personalia of the Germans at the Cape', 427, Leibbrandt, *Precis*, 116k). Jan Christoffel Brodryk of Zwartsenburg became a burgher in 1756 and married in the following year, although he divorced his wife in 1775 after they had produced nine children (NA, VOC 6270, f.248, Hoge, 'Personalia of the Germans at the Cape', 50). Lalou Meltzer and Antonia Malan (pers.comms.) have both suggested that many German residents at the Cape married free black wives.

independently in the colony. In northern Europe, marriage was a pre-requisite for artisan status.[63] At the Cape it was also a means by which outsiders could acquire some capital and property. But in order to be granted burgher *vrijdom*, and to thus establish themselves in their new social surroundings, the smiths had to be known as men of honour whose *eerlijkheid* was not in doubt.[64]

Under these circumstances, the blacksmiths were especially sensitive to an accusation of theft that dishonoured their reputations as men, as skilled workers set (only just) above ordinary Company employees, and as potential burghers in colonial society. This was a serious matter which violated their right to honour and severely threatened their social and economic prospects. They had been both potentially injured materially in terms of their economic prospects in the colony and also insulted in terms of the artisan codes of honour with which they were familiar from Europe. And so they sought redress.[65]

The first indication of this came after the weekend (Krieger had found the spades missing and imposed his collective punishment on the forge workers on the previous Friday). Anthonij van den Steen, who had been sick and absent on that day, demanded to know why his free time should also be denied, to which Krieger replied that "the innocent must suffer with the guilty."[66] The next morning at 7am, the smiths all refused to go to work until their free hour was restored and stated that they would not work for Krieger since he had called them thieves, a point they subsequently stressed to de Ruijter. Two of the workers, Steenberg and Thim, were especially concerned that the theft accusations would adversely affect them since they were seeking permission to become burghers.[67] De Ruijter's response inflamed them further: he replied that there must be a thief amongst them since the spades were missing, and that the culprit should be branded on the *justitie plaats*. Now the smiths were not only accused of being thieves but also threatened with punishment in the most dishonourable way. Merely to be exposed at the execution ground was a highly shameful public experience, but in early modern Germany branding was only second to hanging in its humiliation, since it permanently marked the body as dishonoured.[68] Van den Steen replied that: "You'd better leave that well alone, Sir, that won't be so easy, since that is done to thieves and rogues and the *baas* wants to make us into

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63. Roper, *Oedipus and the devil*, 56; Farr, *Artisans in Europe*, 244; A.Hörsell, 'Borgare, smeder och änkor: ekonomi och befolkning i Eskilstuna gamla stad och fristad, 1750-1850', *Studia Historica Upsaliensia*, vol. 131, 1983, is a specific study of the importance to skilled blacksmiths of marriage in mid-eighteenth-century northern Europe. In Amsterdam, marriage to burgher daughters was also an important means by which artisans acquired burgher status, E.Kuijpers and M.Prak, 'Burger, ingezetene, vreemdeling: burgerschap in Amsterdam in de 17e en 18e eeuw', in J.Kloek and K.Tilmans, eds., *Burger* (Amsterdam, 2002), 120. In early modern Germany, marriage was a sign of a move from the itinerant status of the journeyman to the established position of the craft master, Wiesner, 'Wandervogels and women', 771.
64. van de Pol's study of Amsterdam makes a link between possessing *eer* and access to burgher status, L.C.van de Pol, 'Prostitutie en de Amsterdamse burgherij: eerbegrippen in een vroegmoderne stedelijke samenleving' in P.te Boekhorst, P.Burke en W.Frijhoff, eds., *Cultuur en maatschappij in Nederland, 1500-1850* (Meppel, Amsterdam and Heerlen, 1992), 179. The operation of the burgher system at the Cape and the qualifications for access to it, is a neglected topic.
65. The right to honour and the distinction between "outer" injuries caused by specific accusations and "inner" feelings of loss of status is central to Stewart's understanding of the operation of honour, *Honour*, 12-24.
66. *de onschuldige met de schuldige moste lijden*, CA, CJ 360, f.374r.
67. CA, CJ 360, f.416v.
68. R.van Dülmen, *Theatre of horror: crime and punishment in early modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1990), 49. To call someone branded was a common verbal insult in eighteenth century Paris, D.Garrioch, 'Verbal insults in 18th century Paris' in P.Burke and R.Porter, eds., *The social history of language* (Cambridge, 1987), 108.
69. *Ghij sult het wel laaten Mijn Heer, dat gaat soo gemakkelijk niet, want dat doen men aan schelmen en dieven en de baas soekt ons tot dieven te maaken, daar wij d'Ë Comps. voor eerlijke Lieden dienen*, CA, CJ 360, f.474r. [Q 18]

thieves, although we serve the Hon. Company as honourable men."[69] When de Ruijter ordered them back to work, they replied that, "No, we won't do that, not before we get our good names back."[70]

Matters were at loggerheads. The next day, Wednesday, the smiths went early to de Ruijter's house and, according to him, denied "in most discourteous terms" that they were thieves and repeated their refusal to work under Krieger.[71] It was then that an exasperated de Ruijter threatened them with the further dishonour of a report to the Governor. The smiths, convinced of the injustice done to them and aware that de Ruijter had threatened "to put us in chains and did not want to help us" took matters further into their own hands in order, as van den Steen later claimed "only to get our honourable names back again."[72] Such an appeal to higher authority was characteristic of cases in the Netherlands where insults to honour could not be resolved within a community, or where the offence was caused by social superiors who could not be challenged more directly.[73]

It is a sign of the seriousness with which these events were taken, that Tulbagh was prepared to see the angry and unannounced delegation that stormed into the Castle that morning. His response was also a clear indication that he realised the issues at stake and knew how to calm the situation. All of the strikers who were later interrogated remembered his words to them with absolute clarity and unanimity: that he respected them as "honourable and upright men",[74] but that he also requested them to return to work. He may well have been merely concerned to get the forge back into business, but to the smiths such words were the ultimate vindication. According to de Ruijter, they returned from the Castle to the workshop "crying out aloud Victory, and saying that they had won their case and that the Honourable Governor had given them all that they wanted."[75] In later cross-examination they denied making this loud and public declaration of triumph in the streets, but that was only when they realised with what disrespect the Company viewed their actions.[76] For this was precisely the point. The smiths needed to loudly proclaim their vindicated honour to the general public, in turn

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70. *Neen, dat doen wij niet of willen eerst onzen goeden naam weeder hebben*, CA, CJ 360, f.375r.
71. *in geheel onbeleefde termen*, CA, CJ 360, f.375r. De Ruijter singled out van den Steen and Fee as the most "discourteous".
72. *om ons een ketting aen de voeten te geeven, en ons niet helpen wilde*, CA, CJ 360, f.465v-466r [Q 30]; *om niets anders dan om onse eerlijke naam weederom te hebben*, CA, CJ 360, 475v. [Q 29]
73. E.J.Broers, 'Van Tafel 8 tot Boek 6: de belediging in rechtshistorisch perspectief', *Volkskundig Bulletin: Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Cultuurwetenschap*, vol. 18(3), 1992, 295-313; Leuker, 'Schelmen, hoeren, eerdieven en lastertongen', 305-6; C. Tilly, 'History, sociology and Dutch collective action', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, vol. 15(2), 1989, 147-8. An interesting contemporary colonial parallel is discussed in L.L.Johnson, 'Dangerous words, provocation gestures and violent acts: the disputed hierarchies of plebeian life in colonial Buenos Aires' in Johnson and Lipsett-Rivera, *Faces of honour*, 139-40.
74. *dat hij hun voor eerlijke en brave menschen hield* ,CA, CJ 360, f.417v. See also 413r, 422r, 428v, 436v.
75. *overluijd Victoria geroepen, en teffens gesegt dat zij haar saak gewonnen hadden, en de den Edele Heer Gouverneur hun geeven wilde alle 't geen zij wilden hebben*, CA, CJ 360, f.406r.
76. Malucko was particularly concerned to deny it saying that *wij zijn maar stilletjies aan 't werk gegaan* while Gebel was less clear about the actions of others while excusing himself, *ik niet en kan ook seggen of sulx door iemand is gedaan*. It seems likely that Malucko as the person who felt most wronged, would have proclaimed his vindicated honour. CA, CJ 360, ff.466v-467r and 448v-449r.
77. The significance of honour is that it is publicly known and highly visible to the whole community. These cries in the street match European examples of loudly proclaimed public assertions of honour and dishonour, sometimes approximating to a charivari or cabal against employers, Pol, 'Prostitutie en de Amsterdamse burgherij', 184-5; R.Dekker, 'Labour conflicts and working-class culture in early modern Holland', *International Review of Social History*, vol. 35, 1990, 396; S.Kaplan, 'Réflexions sur la police du monde du travail, 1700-1815', *Revue Historique*, vol. 261, 1979, 33-35. For the shift from public amends to financial compensation in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Cape, see McKenzie, 'Gender and honour', esp. 156-8.

shaming both Krieger and de Ruijter by making known that their accusations had been overturned by the Governor himself.[77]

But Tulbagh's diplomacy at ensuring a return to work was foiled by Krieger's anger at his own shaming. He told the smiths that, "Now you've been to his Honour but you've won nothing since things are just as they were, and now see what I shall do." To prove his point he called Malucko a "damned *gaauwdief* [cutpurse], you rascally servant, why are you so insolent, you are, after all, so *schurft* [scabby]" after Malucko had demanded a new handle for his hammer, to which Malucko responded "Do you know what a rascal servant is, you know well enough what a rascal servant is, and you'll make amends to me for that," an incident which led to a further breakdown of relations and to Malucko's desertion of the workshop.[79] Tulbagh then visited Krieger to find out why matters were not resolved, and subsequently decided to make an example of Malucko by demoting him to the rank of *matroos* and demanding that he report for work on the *werf* [wharf], rather than the *ambagtsquartier*.[80]

Such an action reversed the recognition of honour that the Governor had previously given to the smiths, since Malucko's humiliation was taken as a sleight to them all.[81] The demotion also highlighted the social precariousness of their position. For Malucko, who had arrived at the Cape as a corporal, was not even demoted to *soldaat*, the rank from which most of the other smiths had originated, but instead to *matroos*, the most despised position in the Company. Sailors in the VOC, and generally in the European-Atlantic world, were looked upon as part of the *grauw* (rabble), notoriously undisciplined, rowdy and rebellious. Brawls and other disputes between soldiers and sailors litter the record books of the Cape.[82] Rediker has cogently argued that eighteenth-century sailors developed their own solidarity marked by a distinctive code of conduct forged in the context of the harshness of their working conditions, in which anti-authoritarianism and egalitarianism played a key role, and that this as much as their liminal status as strangers on shore, explained their rowdy reputation throughout the early modern Atlantic world.[83] But this was not the code of the artisans who

78. *nu ben gij bij de Edele heer geweest en gij hebt niets gewonnen want de saak is nog soo als se geweest is, en sult nu sien wat ik doen sal*, CA, CJ 360, f.436v.
79. *bliksemse gaauw dief, jouw racker knegt, hoe ben jij so assurant, jij bent immers schurft genoeg* and *Weet gij wel wat een Racker knegt is, en dat sult gij mij goed maken*, CA, CJ 360, f.400r. For similar versions of the exchange, CA, CJ 360, 406r-v., 425r. My translations do not capture the force of the original. *Gaauwdief* was a particularly insulting term in early modern Holland, Spierenburg, 'Knife fighting and popular codes of honour', 103, while *schurft* was also a common term of insult used in anger (and still is in modern Dutch), van Sterkenburg, *Vloeken*, 251.
80. CA, CJ 360, f.398v, 407v.
81. Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour', 506 comments that within identified groups or communities, "the dishonour cast on one member is felt by all." Such solidarity was a key feature of artisan and journeymen honour in Europe, Farr, *Artisans in Europe*, 251-6. See also n.104 below.
82. For examples, see N.Worden, E.van Heyningen and V.Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town: the making of a city* (Cape Town and Hilversum, 1998), 54-5.
83. M.Rediker, *Between the devil and the deep blue sea: merchant seamen, pirates and the Anglo-American maritime world, 1700-1750* (Cambridge, 1987) esp. ch.5 and P.Linebaugh and M.Rediker, *The many-headed Hydra: the hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic* (London and New York, 2000), esp. ch.5. For other comments on low sailor reputation and sailor-soldier rivalry in the Dutch-VOC world, see A. Th. van Deursen, *Plain lives in a golden age: popular culture, religion and society in 17th century Holland* (Cambridge, 1991), 25; I.Gaskell, 'Tobacco, social deviance and Dutch art in the seventeenth century' in W.Franits, ed., *Looking at seventeenth-century Dutch art: realism reconsidered* (Cambridge, 1997), 70; Boxer, *Dutch seaborne empire*, 69, 77-8, 81; Dekker, 'Labour conflicts and working-class culture in early modern Holland', 377-9, 405-7; S.Schama, *The embarrassment of riches: an interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age*. (London, 1987), 246; van Gelder, *Oost-Indisch avontuur*, 152.

viewed themselves as disciplined and orderly, and to be demoted to a *matroos* represented for them the ultimate dishonouring.[84] Several of Malucko's fellow workers demanded to know on what grounds he "should be on the *werf* and that since he is not a sailor he shouldn't be there"[85] and they refused once again to work until he was returned to the forge "since we are honourable men we want to work alongside him."[86] Malucko himself let it be known that he would return to work at the forge but that he refused to go to the *matroos*e *werf*.[87]

Only three smiths reported for work on the following morning - *paap* Martin Gebel, Jan Thim, who had married a local woman the month before and was doubtless concerned that an overt challenge to authority would harm his chances of becoming a burgher, and Jurgen Swart.[88] The rest stayed away and de Ruijter was obliged to close the forge. At this point the strike became a matter of major concern. Priority was to get the forge back into production. It was, after all, a major capital investment and could not be allowed to lie idle. Furthermore that week the leading officials and burghers of the Colony were gathering in Cape Town to take the oath of allegiance to the new Governor-General in Batavia, an event which included a formal parade and an official banquet.[89] The authorities may have been anxious to avoid the spectre of a strike in the *ambagt-squartier* at a time when the town would be in the public eye, and which would doubtless have come to the attention of the higher authorities in Batavia and the Netherlands. So in the face of the workers' intransigence, Krieger was replaced as *baas smit*.[90] The smiths thus partly got their own way, although Malucko was not returned to the forge.

It appears that the other foremen in the *ambagtsquartier* sided with Krieger. Van den Steen accused the *baas der huijstimmerlieden* of being "the prosecutor and the advocate of our *baas* and that you and he can go to the devil."[91] When overhearing the *baas wagenmaker* accuse the smiths of being

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84. Linebaugh and Rediker, *The many-headed Hydra*, 331-2. Of course this was a view specific to the artisans themselves and others would not have viewed matters in this way. On the contrary one Cape forge worker, Joost Pietersoon of Leiden, rebelled in 1660 because he had enlisted as a soldier and "was therefore not bound to make locks or work in the *winkel*", Leibbrandt, *Precis of the archives of the Cape of Good Hope* (Cape Town, 1898-1906), *Letters Dispatched*, vol. III, 435-7. To their social superiors, artisans were often themselves viewed as rowdy and disruptive to public order, particularly in the eighteenth century as clashes between artisan guilds and civil authorities increased, Farr, *Artisans in Europe*, 163-4.
85. *op de werf soude komen en dat hij geen mattroos sijnde aldaar ook niet wesen moest*, CA, CJ 360, f.451r [Q 44].
86. *'t welk ook eerlijks menschen zijn, soo wilden wij met hem ook werken*, CA, CJ 360, 495r. [Q 46]
87. CA, CJ 360, f.455r-v. The demotion from *ambagtsquartier* to *werf* is also an indicator of the social perception of space in VOC Cape Town. The *werf* and the shoreline generally were low-status areas, the Castle the seat of authority and high status, and the *ambagtquartier* between the two, both physically and in status terms. Malucko later deserts the workshop and heads "Caabwaards" or into the town, which was less under the direct orbit of VOC control, CA, CJ 360, f.400v, 419r. For discussion of Company and burgher space in Cape Town, see N.Worden, 'Space and social identity in VOC Cape Town', *Kronos*, vol. 25, 1999, 72-87.
88. CA, CJ 360, f.410r. Thim became a burgher the following year, see n.62 above. Swart had been in the forge since 1742, went into private employment "on loan" from 1753-9 and was subsequently appointed *baas smit* at the forge from 1760-2. Certainly he was loyal to the Company, Hoge, 'Personalia of the Germans at the Cape', 385.
89. CA, C 1589, ff.78-80 (Dagregister, 18-19 and 26 August, 1752); de la Caille, *Travels*, 18-19.
90. He was anyway nearing the end of his contract. He was temporararily replaced by Hendrick Scheffer, (see n.9 above) until the arrival from Holland in December of the newly appointed *baas*, Johann Christostramus Elgas van Rood Alben (Baden), NA, VOC 5201, f.8-9, VOC 14 219.
91. *de Procurateur en advocaat van onse baas… en sult net soo vaaren also hij en gij sult meede haast na de donder raaken*, CA, CJ 360, f. 484v and 507r. For the association of *donder* with the devil in a curse, see van Strekenburg, *Vloeken*, 279. The *timmerman* responded to this outburst by saying that it was unlikely since he had "never studied in the vaderland" but that van den Steen was rather the prosecutor of the matter, to which Steen replied that he was in no position to be since he could neither read nor write.

krom [crooks], van den Steen warned him not to interfere since, "the matter has nothing to do with you and you mustn't douse a fire that you are not burning … or else I have a needle in my sack that is sharp and prickles," an expression that he certainly intended as a threat.[92] But we know nothing about the response of the lesser-ranking artisans in the other sections of the *ambagtsquartier*. It is unlikely that they would have been involved for this was not a general labour dispute but rather a demand for the restoration of honour by those whose names had been impugned.[93] In this it closely resembled the conduct of eighteenth-century European artisans and craftsmen for whom strikes and other protest actions were often symbolic acts "more restorative than revolutionary" claiming redress for personal sleights and a "ritual of purification" to restore honour.[94] Their actions had been swift and immediate but, as the German social historian Grießinger has stressed, this was not because of some innate "pre-industrial" random spontaneity, but rather an organised response which was fully in accordance with the practices and "Altes Recht" customs of the societies from which they had come.[95] The issue was how this was to be viewed by the Company.

"Following old custom"[96]

This was not the only way in which the 1752 case reveals the codes of honour followed by the VOC blacksmiths. That Malucko should have become a victim of the dispute was no coincidence. For about five months before the incident of the spades he had been at the centre of another altercation in the forge. He had sold a hammer to a "runaway Frenchman" that he claimed that he brought with him from the *vaderland*, but which he had in fact taken from the

92. *dat sijn saaken buijten jouw en 't vuur dat jouw niet brand, dat hoef gij niet te blusschen …anders heb ik een naalde in mijn sak die is spitz en steekt*, CA, CJ 360, 509v. In van den Steen's cross-examination he intriguingly stated that he also said: *mijn moeder heeft melk verkogt en ik heb het jok gedragen, met bijvoeging: past gij maar op, dat gij ook geen jok moet dragen* ["my mother sold milk and I carried the yoke, adding: Watch out that you don't end up carrying a yoke"], CA, CJ 360, f.484r. Such verbal exchanges are rich in loaded metaphor of the kind that would delight historical sociolinguists.

93. The smiths may also have seen themselves as distinct from the others in the *ambagtsquartier* by the nature of their work. On forges as tight communities with "shared values, information and goals", see C.Keller and J.Keller, *Cognition and tool use: the blacksmith at work* (Cambridge, 1996), 18. In Germany (and northern Europe more generally), blacksmiths were viewed as people with special (possibly magical) powers, L.Motz, 'The wise one of the mountain: form, function and significance of the subterranean smith', *Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik*, 379 (Göppingen, 1983) and M.Eliade, *The forge and the crucible: the origins and structures of alchemy* (Chicago and London, 2nd ed., 1978), 25-9 and ch.9.

94. Quotations from Thamer, 'On the use and abuse of handicraft: journeyman culture', 293 and 295-6. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such strike actions had replaced the late medieval and sixteenth century Northern Netherlands practice of *uitgang* by which offended artisans simply left town, R.Dekker, 'Handwerkslieden en arbeiders in Holland van de sestiende tot de achttiende eeuw: identiteit, cultuur en protest' in P.te Boekhorst, P.Burke en W.Frijhoff, eds., *Cultuur en maatschappij in Nederland, 1500-1850* (Meppel, Amsterdam and Heerlen, 1992), 134-40; J.Lucassen, 'Labour and early modern economic development' in K.Davids and J.Lucassen, eds., *A miracle mirrored: the Dutch Republic in European perspective* (Cambridge, 1995), 390-3.

95. Grießinger, *Symbolische Kapital der Ehre*, 414. Grießinger challenges the "pre-industrial" unplanned riot vs. organised industrial strike dichotomy evident in the studies of Rude, Hobsbawm and Thompson by stressing the logic and organisation [Regelstruktur] of eighteenth-century German artisan protests which drew on earlier formulated concepts of honour. His own arguments have been modified by D.Geary, 'Protest and strike: recent research on "collective action" in England, France and Germany' in K.Tenfelde, ed., *Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung im Vergleich* (Munich, 1986), 376-80, on the grounds that notions of rationality in any strike action are problematic, and by Stuart, *Defiled trades* (see n.39 above) on the continuities between eighteenth-century and earlier actions, but Grießinger's emphasis on the logic and rationality of eighteenth-century artisan protests against dishonour remains valid.

96. *volgens oud gebruijk*, CA, CJ 360, f.503r [Q 5].

97. This was according to Gebel, CA, CJ 360, f.449r-v [Q 36-39]. In later cross-examination, Malucko denied this, claiming that he had brought the hammer with him from Batavia, and that Krieger had *mij…mishandelt en geslagen* [ill-treated and beaten …me] as a result, CA, CJ 360, f.468v [Q 43]. There is no record in Malucko's *scheepsoldijboek* (NA, VOC 6265, f.24) that he had worked in Batavia, although since he was 41 years old (CA, CJ 360, f.459r [Q 1]), he could well have served a previous contract with the VOC and returned home on another ship - as did Otto Rickers (see n. 58 above).

Company workshop.[97] Krieger punished him by a beating with a *rotan* [cane], but he was also obliged to pay a "fine" of half an *arm* of wine to the other workers in the forge "in atonement for the theft."[98] Although we know tantalisingly few details of this episode, it bears great similarities to similar cases among German and Dutch artisans, by which a worker whose actions had broken the codes of honour was declared *vuil* [unclean] and *oneerlijk* [dishonourable], and could only be symbolically redeemed by payment of a fine imposed by his fellow workers, and sometimes by a drinking ritual to "wash" out the stigma. A worker who refused to do this would be expelled from the workshop.[99]

Malucko had admitted guilt, paid his dues and so was redeemed by the other blacksmiths, but the incident made him an obvious suspect in the matter of the spade theft. This is certainly why Krieger told the forge on the morning when the spades were discovered to be missing that he "half knew who the thief was"[100] and why he later called Malucko a *blixemse gaauwdief* [damned cutpurse].[101] Malucko's reply that he could not be so accused "or at least in the fatherland that's how it would be,"[102] shows that the "fine" had, according to European custom, fully redeemed him. But de Ruijter also used Malucko's past against him, telling Thim and Steenberg, two smiths who were seeking to be made burghers, that "if they continued to work with Malucko when he had taken a hammer, they must be also considered as thieves,"[103] a comment which they reported to the rest of the workshop with some concern. It appears that de Ruijter's tactics were beginning to split the solidarity of the blacksmiths. If Malucko were again proved to be a thief, the honour of all the forge workers would also be tainted.[104] It was after this that Malucko deserted the workshop, accompanied by Fee and another smith, Anthonij van Rooijen, because in Malucko's own words, "I had to stay away from the forge since the men didn't want to work with me."[105] De Ruijter reported to the Governor that the smiths refused to work with Malucko, and it was for this reason that Tulbagh transferred him from the *ambagtsquartier* to *de werf*.[106] However, as we have seen, Malucko's demotion to *matroos* was sufficient to re-unite the smiths in their refusal to work for Krieger.

There was another reason why Krieger was especially angered with Malucko. At their meeting with the Governor, Malucko had stated that it was likely that Krieger himself had been responsible for the disappearance of the spades. He reported that about three months earlier he had seen Krieger take a bench vice and a new bickern (a special kind of anvil) out of the Company

98. *tot verzoening dier diefte*, CA, CJ 360, f.449v-450r, 493r-v [Q.37]; 469r [Q 44]. The words are Malucko's own, he did not deny the offence.
99. Thamer, 'On the use and abuse of handicraft: journeyman culture', 288; Dekker, 'Labour conflicts and working-class culture', 395; Dekker, 'Handwerkslieden en arbeiders in Holland', 141.
100. *dien dief wel ten halven wist*, CA, CJ 360, f.435v.
101. CA, CJ 360, f.376r.
102. *of moet selfs in 't vaderland soo een geweest zijn*, CA, CJ 360, f.418v.
103. *soo zij langer met den Relatant* [Malucko] *werkten als die een hamer soude ontvreemd hebben, hij hen insegelijk als dieven aanmerken moeste*, CA, CJ 360, f.418v.
104. In the Netherlands if a worker who had been declared *vuil* remained at work, the whole workshop was considered dishonoured, Dekker, 'Labour conflicts and working-class culture', 397; van de Pol, *Amsterdams hoerdom*, 74.
105. *ik heb moeten van de winkel absent blijven dewijl het volk met mij niet werken wilde*, CA, CJ 360, f.469r [Q 46].
106. CA, CJ 360, f.407v. Certainly Steenberg said he was reluctant to do so, CA, CJ 360, f.425v.

stores, saying that they were to be taken on an official Company expedition into the interior. However he had then ordered Malucko to repair a smaller vice and to make a new anvil for the journey.[107] The implication was that Krieger was keeping the other vice and anvil himself. In so doing, Malucko was accusing him of being a thief, thus countering Krieger's own accusations.

From the start the smiths had said that the spades must have been taken by someone else, and they initially blamed the *zwarte jongens*, the slaves who worked in the forge.[108] However by accusing Krieger to the Governor they were going much further than merely shifting blame from themselves. The necessity for the humiliation of a wrongful accuser was characteristic of societies with developed codes of social honour. In northern European societies this could be by a challenge to duel or enforced public apology, although these were usually demanded of social equals.[109] In this case the smiths were dealing with their superior. Appeal to authority had failed, so the forge workers took other measures. They sought to humiliate Krieger by accusing him in turn of theft. By so diminishing his honour, they would recover their own.[110] They later considerably elaborated their claims. Gebel reported that Malucko had told the Governor he had seen Krieger coming out of the *winkel* at night with a sack, behaviour which was "not fitting for a *baas*" while Thiele stated in later cross-examination that he too had seen Krieger twice entering the *winkel* between 9 and 10 pm with a slave carrying a sack, and coming out again with the sacks filled with objects which they took into the town.[111] Gebel also accused Krieger of "daily" taking things out of the workshop to his own house, particularly in the afternoons when de Ruijter was asleep. After Krieger had been replaced by Scheffer as *baas smit*, Malucko and the other *volk* asked Gebel to visit Krieger's own home, where he found the stolen vice.[113] Van den Steen also complained that Krieger had ordered him to make a wooden key to replace one that he had sold to an "Englishman".[114] Fee told de Ruijter in the confrontation between him and the smiths that Krieger "took work away under his clothes whenever he was at the Company's work though he could have taken them openly," an accusation which led de Ruijter to scold Fee for his insolence and to call him a *strondhap* [pile of turd].[115]

This torrent of counter-accusation against Krieger reached a peak with a petition addressed to the Fiscal. It was unsigned, but complained with one voice

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107. CA, CJ 360, f.419r-v.
108. CA, CJ 360, f.374v. Malucko had also accused Krieger from the start, CA, CJ 360, f. 460v [Q.7]. The attempted dishonouring of Krieger by these accusations was in marked contrast to the implications the smiths made that slaves had either taken the spades themselves, or had assisted Krieger in his removal of goods from the workshop. Slaves were not considered to possess honour by either the smiths or the authorities (although of course they had a sense of honour themselves), and they were not therefore liable to dishonour in this manner. The matter was not pursued, and it seems that the slaves were not even interrogated. The accusations do however give a momentary glimpse of the presence of slaves in the forge.
109. Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour'; Stewart, *Honour*, 65 points out that revenge on a social superior has to be obtained by other means than direct challenge.
110. Honour lost by one is gained by another, Farr, *Hands of honour*, 185.
111. *geen baas betaamde*, CA, CJ 360, f. 429v-430r., f. 399r.,f.488v [Q.33].
112. CA, CJ 360, f.457r [Q 70].
113. CA, CJ 360, f.470v-471r.
114. CA, CJ 360, f.422v.
115. *werk onder sijn rok wegdroegen waneer het 's Comp werk was, hij het immers wel openbaar konde wegdragen*, CA, CJ 360, f.496v. [Q 53]

against *onsen smeede Baas* [our *Baas* blacksmith]. After recounting Krieger's accusation of theft against them and the visit they made "to satisfy our conscience" to the Governor, it proceeded to indict, "our *Baas*, who by night and at other strange times, and even sometimes twice a night, visits the forge with a slave carrying a sack, and carries out of it whatever they wanted, so that it is our humble opinion that this seems just like theft and that he could in such a way take away the whole workshop, and if he cannot balance his books as a result he then blames us and tarnishes our honourable names."[116] The petitioners then pulled their trump card by stating that they could not continue to serve "without the greatest prejudice in the world under the command of a man who is himself guilty of the deeds of which he accuses others and seeks to rob them of their honourable names," and they asked that the matter be fully investigated.[117]

It is not clear whether Tulbagh had heard of this petition before he visited Krieger, nor what role the accusations played in causing Krieger's replacement as *baas smit*. But they were certainly taken seriously by the Fiscal, who cross-examined Krieger on 19 September and asked if he was aware "that he had greatly sinned in defrauding the Hon. Company?"[118] Krieger steadfastly denied guilt, claiming that he had replaced faulty equipment with new materials paid for out of his own money (a somewhat unlikely assertion), and that, "I acted to its (ie the Company's) advantage and not disadvantage."[119] Nonetheless, the damage to Krieger's reputation had been done.

Krieger was also interrogated by the Fiscal on another matter of concern to the Company authorities. For it was not only the questioning of their honour that had upset the forge workers. They were also concerned about his removal of their "free hour". Anthonij van den Steen, who had been away on the day the spades went missing, was particularly outraged that he should lose this benefit, and it featured prominently in the first complaints that the smiths made to de Ruijter.[120] Yet when they went to the Governor, there was some debate amongst them as to whether they should raise the matter. Van den Steen believed that it was important, but "Paap" Gebel and the others preferred to stress the issue of honour.[121] When they returned to the workshop afterwards, Krieger taunted them saying, "Why didn't you ask the Hon. Gentleman for your hour?": adding, "now you won't get your hour back again."[122]

The reasons for this concern only become apparent in Krieger's later cross-examination when he was asked whether he had permitted workers to do

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116. *de wijlen wij onse consciente vry woesten; … onse Baas die med Naght en Ontydt, en wel in eene Nagt somtijds 2 keer med zyn met een Sack varziene Jongen de Winkel besogt, en daaruijt gehaalt, wat hen gelust heeft dat sou onse eenfoudige gedagten na wel eer eenen Dief gelijken en op sulke Manier hij wel den heelen Winkel wegdragen, en ons daarvoor als hij met zijne Rekening niet uijtkomen ons om sik selv te verschoenen en onsen eerlyken Naam graveeren konde*, CA, CJ 360, f.439 r-v.
117. *sonder de grootse Prejudice van de Wereld onder eenes Mans Commando staen konnen, die selvs schuldig is in sulken Saken waarmede hij andere beschuldigen en van haren Eerlijken Naam berooven wilt*, CA, CJ 360, f.440r.
118. *dat hij in 't defraudeeren der E Comp grootelijks gepecceert heeft?*, CA, CJ 360, f. 505r [Q.15].
119. *ik vermijne sulx tot voordeel maar niet tot nadeel gedaen te hebben* CA, CJ 360, f.505r [Q.15].
120. CA, CJ 360, f.374r.
121. CA, CJ 360, f.374b. In later cross-examination on 27 September, Gebel specifically asked that it be added to his original testimony of 11 September that he had said nothing about the free hour. Clearly he had become aware of the seriousness of the issue as the authorities began to probe further, CA, CJ 360, f.457v-458r.
122. *waarom hebt gij nu bij de Edele Heer om jou uur niet gevraagt: met bijvoeging nu hebt gij de uur dog niet weederom*, CA, CJ 360, f.493r [Q 35].

their own private work, to which he replied that, "following old custom I sometimes gave the men an hour to work for themselves."[123] For the "hour" was not an official work break, but rather a period when Krieger had illegally permitted the smiths to use the Company's facilities to do work on their own behalf, albeit a long-established "custom". The smiths were thus placed in the awkward position of being aggrieved at the removal of a privilege which the authorities would not sanction. Their solution was again to shift the blame on to Krieger, whom they accused of forcing them to spend the time doing work for his own private benefit. Malucko claimed that his argument with Krieger on their return from the Governor was because he had refused to work at a task which *de volke seijde dat sulx geen Comp werk was* [the men said that this wasn't Company work], a charge Krieger strongly denied.[124] Malucko also told Krieger that he would take longer than usual to complete his work want *gij neemt ons dog onse uur af* [since you have taken away our hour].[125]

The issue of the "free hour" was thus part of the contest about honour and reputation between the smiths, Krieger and the Company authorities. It also sheds much light on their precarious financial position. The smiths told de Ruijter that they needed their free hour in the evening, "since they could not survive on the Company's wages," and Krieger also asked de Ruijter to provide coal and iron for them to use at the forge. De Ruijter's response was that he knew nothing about the "free hour" and that he "could not give away the Company's coals or iron."[127] He nonetheless admitted that since the smiths earned only "*een bagatel*", private work could well be necessary for them, and that he would investigate the matter if only they would return to work.[128] The financial hardship of VOC employees was renowned and the only means of survival, let alone profit, was private work or trading by whatever means available. Although Mentzel claimed that "the earnings of artisans are comparatively high at the Cape because money is plentiful," many relied on extra earnings to supplement their income.[129]

That use of the forge for private work followed *oud gebruijk* indicates one way in which hard-pressed employees overcame their financial hardship.[130] But their claims to "customary" use of workplace materials also reflected their

123. *ik heb volgens oud gebruijk het volk somwijlen een uurtje voor hunselven gegeven on te werken*, CA, CJ 360, f.503r [Q 5]. Also f.398r.
124. *ibid* and f.417v. In interrogation the only person that admitted to the fact that the smiths worked on their own behalf was Jacob Fee, the youngest member of the forge (19 years old), a Roman Catholic (which made him something of an outsider) and perhaps more naïve than the rest, CA, CJ 360, f.486r [Q 1]; 493r [Q 35].
125. CA, CJ 360, f.467v [Q 37].
126. *want van 'S Comps. gagie kunnen wij niet bestaan*, CA, CJ 360, f.405r.
127. *van de Comp geen koolen of ijzer weggeeven konde*, CA, CJ 360, 375r. Shortage of iron and coal was a problem for burgher smiths in Cape Town and the forge workers were at an advantage by their access to Company supplies, Erasmus, 'Geskiedenis van die bedryfslewe', 179.
128. CA, CJ 360, 398r, 375r, 376v, 398r.
129. Mentzel, *Geographical and topographical description*, 60. Opper, 'Dutch East India Company artisans', 66 and 270-73 suggests that the high turnover of artisans in the VOC kept wages at a low level, and indeed only one worker in the Cape Town forge in 1752 (Jurgen Swart) earned more than the minimum, presumably because he was the only one who had been there for over five years. The official wages of smiths in other VOC stations was much the same as the Cape, NA VOC 5200, so Mentzel might either have been wrong (as he often was) or else was referring to the potential for Cape artisans to earn extra money by working on the side. On this *pasganger* system among Cape soldiers, see W.Dooling, 'The Castle in the history of Cape Town in the VOC period' in E.van Heyningen, ed., *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, vol. 7, 1994, 14. Wiebe Kreessenburg's indebtedness is one indication of the smiths' financial precariousness, see n.59 above.

belief that they had rights that went beyond those of the wage labourer. Such practice was widespread in Europe, and a source of conflict when employers tried to forbid it, as happened increasingly in the eighteenth century.[131] The forge workers' assertions thus resonated with their sense of "Altes Recht" which the Company was attempting to override, and were typical of artisan legitimation conflicts of eighteenth-century northern Europe.[132]

"Severely whipped by the sailors on the wharf"[133]

By the end of August it appeared that the blacksmiths had won their point. Krieger's replacement by Scheffer was sufficient to persuade them to return to work, presumably satisfied that with their *baas* ousted their honour was restored, although Malucko appears not to have been allowed back to the forge. Moreover, Krieger was already near the end of his contract and three months later he became a burgher, remaining in the colony until his death in 1774.[134] Clearly the accusations made against him were not sufficient to deny him burgher status as far as the authorities were concerned and, although he was interrogated about them, no action was taken against him. But the matter was not allowed to rest there. Extensive testimony was collected in September from the leading strikers. In late October Fiscal Rheede van Oudtshoorn reported that the issues which the whole episode had raised were somewhat ambiguous and he sought advice from the *Raad van Justitie* as to how to proceed.[135] Their response was that a case should brought against the blacksmiths, on the grounds of their "great impudence and insolence".[136]

At no point in the proceedings was the claim of the blacksmiths that their honour had been attacked taken seriously, although Roman-Dutch law as applied at the Cape recognised public and intentional accusation of theft as grounds for a civil (but not criminal) case of defamation.[137] The issue at stake as far as the Fiscal was concerned was rather the criminal threat to Company authority which the forge strike had posed. The dangers of challenging the hier-

130. See E.Hatch, 'Theories of social honour', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 91, 1989, 341-53 on "materialist" and "non-materialist" approaches to social honour. The only other example of an artisan strike in the VOC world hitherto noted by historians took place in the workshops located on Onrust in Batavia harbour in 1723, when the strikers smashed up the forge and justified their actions on the grounds that the Company had "stolen" from them by paying them meagre wages, Opper, 'Dutch East India Company artisans', 274. A brief report on this case is given in NA, VOC 1985, 179r-182r but the detailed court records are missing. The accusation of Company "theft" by the Onrust artisans indicates that they too believed they had been wronged - and dishonoured - by their employers.
131. For example in the London dockyards, P.Linebaugh, *The London hanged: crime and civil society in the eighteenth century* (London, 1991), 378-81 and in the Venice arsenal, R.Davis, *Shipbuilders of the Venetian arsenal: workers and workplace in the pre-industrial city* (Baltimore, 1991), 119-22.
132. Grießinger, *Symbolische Kapital der Ehre*, 435-43; Farr, *Artisans in Europe*, 200-1.
133. *door de mattroosen op de Equipagie werf dapper gelaarst*, CA, CJ 34, ff.92-3.
134. NA, VOC 14 752; CA, C 1119, Requesten 1752, No. 83, ff.182-3, undated. Krieger's application may have been made in anticipation of the end of his contract in November and before the complaints made against him, although approval could presumably have been rescinded. At his death in 1774 he left a moderate estate, including a number of iron goods (doubtless from the forge) and three slaves, CA, MOOC. 8/15, no.24.
135. CA, CJ 360, f.393r.
136. *groote assurantien en brutaliteiten*,CA, CJ 34, ff. 85-6.
137. C.F.Amerasinghe, *Defamation and other aspects of the Actio Iniuriarum in Roman-Dutch law in Ceylon and South Africa* (Colombo, 1968), 38; van de Pol, 'Prostitutie en de Amsterdamse burgerij', 194 [n.79]. On Roman-Dutch law of defamation and its application to the VOC Cape, see B.Ranchod, *Foundations of the South African law of defamation.* (Leiden, 1972) ch. III. See the articles in A.Keunen and H.Roodenburg, *Schimpen en schelden: eer en belediging in Nederland, c.1600-c.1800*, special issue of *Volkskundig Bulletin: Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Cultuurwetenschap*, vol. 18(3), 1992, 289-440 on defamation actions in seventeenth and eighteenth century Netherlands.

archy of command were far greater than any sleight to the blacksmiths.[138] Throughout the case there was an underlying assumption by the Fiscal that Krieger and de Ruijter were quite justified in their accusations for two distinct reasons: that one of the smiths must have been responsible for the theft, but also that they had no right anyway to challenge their superiors. De Ruijter was called to give testimony but was not cross-examined, while Krieger was questioned over the accusations that he had taken goods from the warehouse and had allowed the workers to use Company equipment for their own gain, but his authority over the forge or wisdom in accusing the smiths of theft was never doubted. To have done so would have brought into disrepute the whole hierarchy of authority on which Company rule was based.

The Fiscal was thus concerned not with the disappearance of the spades but with the disappearance of discipline from the forge. Most of his questions were aimed at discovering who the ringleaders were.[139] Three were identified on the grounds that they had most severely challenged authority: Godfried Malucko, Anthonij van den Steen and Jacob Fee. Malucko had already been singled out by Krieger, de Ruijter and the Governor as a major source of trouble, and during cross-examination he had been told that "the obstinacy he had committed was highly punishable."[140] Van den Steen was held particularly responsible for demanding the illegal "free hour" and for encouraging the other smiths to strike when it was denied to them, as well as being especially insubordinate to de Ruijter. Fee had joined van den Steen in complaining about maltreatment, had admitted doing his own work in Company time and had threatened to attack Krieger if he returned to the workshop - verbal assault on a *baas*, even if made in the heat of anger, was a serious matter.[141]

The Fiscal's recommendations to the *Raad van Justitie* were that Krieger had not been at fault and that no action should be taken against him (though his removal from the forge before the end of his contract may have been punishment enough). But he argued that the smiths were all guilty of sedition, especially van den Steen, Fee and Malucko.[142] He proposed that van den Steen and Fee be whipped at the "criminal justice place" [the execution ground] and then sent to work in chains on Robben Island for six years, while Malucko should be tied to the *Paal* [the post at the execution ground] and whipped by the *Kaffers*, stripped of his rank and sent to work for three years on Edam (a penal island off the coast

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138. On the importance of maintaining hierarchy among the VOC personnel, see Lequin, *Het personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Azie*, 48.
139. One of the main features of strike action is that it involves collective action that avoids blame being pinned on individuals, D.Geary, 'Brazilian slaves and European workers in the 18th and 19th centuries', International Conference on Slavery, Unfree Labour and Revolt in Asia and the Indian Ocean Region, CERINS, University of Avignon, 2001, 8.
140. *gepleegde obstinatie grootelijks straafbaar is*, CA, CJ 360, f.469v [Q. 48].
141. CA, CJ 360, ff.474v-475r [Q.21, 26 and 27].
142. CA, CJ 360, f.380v-381r. The Fiscal declared all the smiths guilty of *publique ongepermitteerde murmureeringen en uijtspanningen mitsgds gepleegde groove brutaliteiten en betoonde zeer enorme vilipendien soo aan hun baas also ook in zonderheijd aan hun Fabriek en principale gebieder de heer Hendrik de Ruijter* and *obstinate weijgering van hun plicht in 't waarneemen van hun ambagt in den dienst der E Comp*, CA, CJ 360, f.379v.
143. Banishment was a common punishment for second offences by thieves in Holland, Spierenburg, *Spectacle of suffering*, 136; Dekker, 'Labour conflicts and working-class culture', 391-2 and 411-12. Malucko may have been viewed as a second offender but the Fiscal's proposals for Fee and van den Steen were severe. Banishment with hard labour to another VOC station was the means by which the VOC ensured that they obtained continued value from their (now unpaid) employees. Skilled artisans in Batavia were less likely to be banished if their labour was required there, although they could be made to work in chains in the artisan quarter, Ward, '"The bounds of bondage"', 215-16.

of Batavia), all involving public humiliation as well as hard labour.[143] The *Raad*'s actual sentences removed the hard labour but kept the humiliation. All three were "severely whipped by the sailors at the shipyard and then it is found appropriate by the Hon. Governor that they should be sent away from here as sailors at 9 fl. a month." The other seventeen smiths were fined one month's wages and returned to work in the *ambagtsquartier*.[144]

The punishments meted out might appear in modern eyes to be less severe than those which the Fiscal had recommended. But in terms of the sensitivity to honour and status which had been such a dominant feature of the whole dispute they were designed to be particularly humiliating. The three were to be publically flogged by sailors, their social inferiors, and on the wharf, a place which Fee had strongly objected to as demeaning during his dispute with de Ruijter.[145] Worse still, they were demoted to sailor rank, the most despised of positions in the Company, and expelled from the Cape.[146] The rest who were held to be less culpable were denied wages, but not (to the same extent) their public honour.

The *Raad van Justitie* was far from impartial and certainly did not act as the neutral arbitrator of a labour dispute. The smiths had earlier obtained recognition of their honour from the Governor and had also succeeded in ousting Krieger, but it seems that this was only done as a means of ensuring that they returned to work. For the Company forge could not be allowed to close, and the authorities had little alternative in a remote outpost (with no skilled blacksmiths to replace them) than to bow before the strikers' demands in order to ensure that it re-opened.[147] But this posed a dilemma, reflected in the Fiscal's request to the *Raad van Justitie* as to what he should do in the matter. Neither the Governor's words honouring the strikers nor Krieger's removal could be reversed, but were the forge workers to be allowed to get away with their affront to Company authority? Would the customs or rights that artisans were claiming in Europe be allowed to triumph over the VOC's control of its employees at the Cape? Clearly such a situation was considered unacceptable. The court proceedings thus focussed on the breaking of Company rules by the ringleaders: the "insolence" to appointed superiors, Malucko's earlier theft and the use of Company time and resources for their own gain. As in eighteenth-century northern Europe, artisan honour was sacrificed to the state, in this case represented by the VOC.

As far as the Cape record is concerned, this was the end of the matter. Honour in early modern European societies, once lost, was rarely reacquired.[148] But it is not clear if this was true in a colonial context and particularly when the

144. *door de mattroosen op de Equipagie werf dapper gelaarst en voorts met goedgevinden van den Edele Heer Gouverneur voor mattroosen a f.9 per maand van hier versonden te werden*, CA, CJ 34, ff.92-3.
145. CA, CJ 360, 409r. See also n.87 above.
146. Ward, '"Bounds of bondage"', 236 points out that it was unusual for Cape criminals to be banished outside the colony. The skills of the forge workers may have made their deployment to Batavia particularly desirable.
147. The shortage of skilled artisans from Europe led the VOC authorities in Batavia to issue an order in 1753 to search for local inhabitants (including slaves) who could be employed in that capacity, Lequin *Het personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Azie*, 46; J.A.van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch plakaatboek, 1602-1811* (Batavia and The Hague, 1889), vol.6, 456ff; vol.7, 106.
148. Stewart, *Honour*, 125.

strike leaders were transferred to other parts of the VOC world. The careers of those lesser culprits who remained in Cape Town seem not to have been adversely affected, with some later becoming burghers and two ending up as *baas smit*. Malucko, Fee and van den Steen were duly deported to Batavia aboard the *Thorenvliet*.[149] The young Jacob Fee did not long survive Batavia's notoriously unhealthy climate and died in the Company hospital on 21 February 1754, leaving behind no possessions.[150] Van den Steen worked in the Batavia *logie* for six years before returning to Europe in 1761.[151] Godfried Malucko continued his eventful career in Cheribon, on the northern Javanese coast, until he returned to Europe in 1758.[152] It seems that they were not confined to one place nor reduced to the permanent status of sailors. Their dishonouring at the Cape may thus have been localised in its impact, and the labour needs of the Company in the East Indies may well have over-ridden the sentence passed at the Cape. However, like the whereabouts of the missing spades, on this issue the record is silent. Our momentary glimpse into the *mentalité* of the eighteenth century is over.

149. The banishment was carried out immediately: *Thorenvliet* was in Cape Town harbour on its way to Batavia between 14 November and 6 December 1752. The addition of three men obliged to work as sailors would have been especially welcome since 11 sailors had deserted from the ship in S. Tiago, Bruijn, *Dutch-Asiatic shipping*, Vol. II, 540-1.
150. NA, VOC 6272, f.283. He was twenty years old.
151. It is not known in what capacity. NA, VOC 13 052, f.33.
152. NA, VOC 6265, f.24.