

The Journal of
Hendrik Jacob Wikar (1779)

with an English translation

by

A. W. VAN DER HORST

and

The Journals of Jacobus Coetsé Jansz: (1760)

and

Willem van Reenen (1791)

with an English translation

by

DR. E. E. MOSSOP

Edited, with an introduction and footnotes, by

DR. E. E. MOSSOP



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Company at Amsterdam and arrived at the Cape in 1773 as *soldaat* (soldier). This office did not necessarily imply military duties. For nearly two years he was writer (*schrijver*) to the Honourable Company's Hospital, a large building then situate between the present Wale and Church Streets at the upper end of Adderley Street in Cape Town. He earned nine gulden per month. Wikar took to gambling and card playing. He neglected his work and became indebted to various friends to the extent of one hundred Rixdollars.

By one of these friends, to whom he owed twenty-two Rixdollars, he was publicly insulted in the street. Overcome by shame, and desperate, he deserted from the Company's service on April 4th, 1775. He resolved to disappear inland, "not anticipating," he says, "all the peril and wretchedness I must encounter during the 4 years and 6 months that I remained undetected." He knew that no deserter was safe from the long arm of the D.E.I. Company, "so far as the Country was inhabited by Christians," and fled beyond the settled districts of the Kamiesberg. The well watered valleys of this fine mountain range were already becoming dotted with the farms of the early burgers. Of Wikar's adventures between April, 1775, and September, 1778, we know nothing; we meet him for the first time in his diary on the banks of the Orange River at or near Goodhouse, where to-day, in desert isolation, there is a flourishing citrus farm owned by Mr. C. Weidner. Only those who have travelled between Springbok or Steinkopf in Namaqualand and Goodhouse will be able to realise the waste of sand and stony mountain which Wikar must have traversed to arrive at this lonely place. It was then remarkable only as the site of a ford or drift used by the Hottentots for entering Great Namaqualand. An approach to the ford—wide, gently sloping, flooded by deep red sand in which grows tufted Bushman grass—winds for miles through the clustering mountains and kopjes which jealously guard the Great River. This approach crosses the dead valley of Koa—

the name of which means sand dunes—and winds beside mysterious Vuurdood, a pyramidal peak on which there rests, owing to some peculiar composition of its rock, an eternal shadow though the sky be ever cloudless. The Hottentots called the ford *Gū-daos*, or Sheep Path, and Wikar on his map has noted this all-too-rare and easy approach to it as Goedous Opening.

So far as is known the Orange River before this time had been crossed by Europeans only twice. It was then known as the Eyn, Gariép or more commonly as the Groote Rivier. It was not until 1779 that it was named the Orange River by the Dutch Colonel of Scots descent, Robert Jacob Gordon.

At some time before Wikar set out upon his second journey along the river on April 1st, 1779, he had sent a petition (*smeekbrief*) to Governor van Plettenberg. He entrusted it to some Hottentots to give to the nearest European farmer. In his petition he asked humbly for pardon and forgiveness for his desertion. He told the Governor that, in his service, "he had made a collection of natural objects and rarities," and that during his wanderings he had kept a journal which contained notes of the ceremonies, customs and beliefs of three hitherto unknown tribes. These were the Eynicquas, who lived on the islands of the Great River and who have now disappeared or become absorbed, and the tribes now known as the Koranna Hottentots and the Briqua (BaThlaping) who are of Bantu origin.

In June, 1779, Wikar returned from his second journey along the Orange River to his "house," which we are only told was "down along the river" (*onderaan die rivier*), and he there received the Governor's permit or pass authorizing his return to the Cape. This had reached him through the good offices of the Heer Oloff de Wet, Landdrost of Stellenbosch, who later helped Wikar to produce for the Governor's perusal an "improved" edition of his diary which is now preserved in the Cape Archives. Wikar set out on his return to the Cape on July 11th, 1779, and signed at "Cabo"

country is a part of that great finger of desolation which the Kalahari has pointed across the river towards the heart of the Cape Province. The half-a-score of humble dwelling houses, farmsteads of the enormous farms which abut on the river, do not lie upon its banks. They are as a rule situated beside springs, four, six or even ten miles from the Orange River to which there is access through the mountains by defiles or kloofs which descend sharply riverwards. Descending from the high plateau through these hot defiles to the low-lying river is both fatiguing and unpleasant. The grassy flats described by Wikar are knee high in grass only after the rare rains, and for the greater part of most years are a desolation of red Kalahari sand. East of these flats upon the high plateau there runs a chain of mountains which lie at a right angle to Wikar's route. This range is marked *Koning Hendrik de IV Berg* upon the map of the Gordon Collection, a part of which is here reproduced; in 1826 it was named the Morpeth Hills by the English traveller George Thompson. Both these names have fallen into disuse and the chain as an entity appears to be nameless at the present day. Its higher peaks, however, have names attached to them which they in turn have given, or perhaps received from, the large farms on which they lie. These are Ariams (Hot Water), Witwater, IJzerberg (Iron Mountain), Schuiklip (Boat Rock), and at the southern extremity, Tafelkop and Praamberg (Breast Mount). This was the "mountain" which Wikar crossed on September 25th when on his way to the spring at Hongais (now, Lower Swartmodder). In the opinion of the editor there is little doubt that he crossed it at the IJzerberg, a mountain of black ironstone and manganese ore which lies a few miles south of the farmstead now called Zwart Oup, where graphite has lately been discovered.

4. Buffelskop, marked upon his map (see Wikar's Map, p. 192) but not mentioned in his narrative, was identified as the kopje at Eenduin (Enkeleduin) whose

krantzies resemble the buttressed and curving horns of a buffalo. Locally this kopje is now nameless; it lies half a mile east of Enkeleduin Station beside the narrow-gauge railway, which of late years has been constructed from Upington to supply the needs of the growing and flourishing settlement at Kakamas. It is probably not a mere coincidence that the adjacent farm is to this day called Kousas, a name like Koussie, derived from /Gaob, buffalo.

Wikar's *Berigt*²⁾ appeared in print for the first time in 1916 in Dr. E. C. Godée Molsbergen's *Reizen in Zuid Afrika in de Hollandse Tyd. Deel II. pp. 78-138*. For a considerable time this fine volume of the Linschoten Society has been out of print and is now almost unobtainable. Contemporary accounts of Wikar's wanderings exist in three Dutch manuscripts in addition to the one transcribed by Dr. Godée Molsbergen. Two similar books in manuscript were prepared by Wikar with the assistance of Landdrost Olof de Wet, one was sent to Holland, is now in the Hague Archives and is referred to by Dr. Godée Molsbergen as the "Editio ad usum Gubernatoris."³⁾ Its companion, a manuscript of 26 folios with a folded map, is preserved in the Cape Archives. This journal, "enlarged and brought into orderly style," is written in High Dutch which lacks the freshness and originality of language of Wikar's personal narrative as printed in *Reizen in Zuid Afrika*.⁴⁾ Its importance to the South African is that in it Wikar's map, here reproduced for the first time, has been preserved, and that it contains information, obtained by de Wet from Wikar, which does not appear in the *Berigt*. When mention in this

²⁾ *Rijksarchief, 's Gravenhage. Kol. Aanw. 1914. Van Plettenberg Archief No. 29.*

³⁾ This has appeared in a German translation, not annotated topographically, in *Die ältesten Reiseberichte über Deutsch-Südwestafrika* by Prof. Dr. Eduard Moritz. (*Mitteilungen aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten. Bd. 31. Berlin 1918.*)

⁴⁾ The difference in style and language is discussed by Prof. Franken. See p. 239 *et seq.*

book is made of the "Editio ad usum Gubernatoris" now preserved in the Cape Archives it is referred to as A.

A fourth manuscript is also known. Three months after Wikar's reinstatement in the service of the D.E.I. Company he wrote a *Relaas* or Relation of his adventures for Hendrik Cloete, of Nooitgedacht, Stellenbosch. This is dated December 31, 1779, and is a short, racy resumé of his longer *Berigten* or Reports, but it contains some valuable information about Wikar's reasons for desertion. Cloete sent the manuscript to the son of the Cape-born Governor, Hendrik Swellengrebel, who had retired in 1751 and died in 1763 at Utrecht in Holland. In 1926 Eerw. A. Dreyer, Archivaris Synodi of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Cape Province, while at Arnhem, was shewn this manuscript which had been preserved by the Swellengrebel family. Recognizing its value and interest to South Africans, Mr. Dreyer published the *Relaas* under the title "'n Interessante Reisverhaal" in *Het Zoekligt Deel iv*. 1926. When mention in this book is made of Eerw. A. Dreyer's publication, it will be briefly called the *Relaas*.

In addition to the assistance which Wikar's map provides, light is thrown upon his journey by a study of Map 3 from the Collection made by Col. Gordon between 1777 and 1790. (*Gordon-verzameling, Ryks Prentenkabinet te Amsterdam.*) That portion of this map which shews the course of the Orange River is here reproduced.

During Wikar's lifetime an English gentleman toured throughout England; wrote a journal of his travels in twenty-four manuscript volumes; became (for two weeks) the Fifth Viscount Torrington, and then died. In the first six of his volumes, which have now been printed, he succeeded in making an observation which bears repetition here. He wrote, "all diaries, let them be ever so bad, will be read with avidity hereafter."

Wikar's keen insight and interest in all he observed

led him to write a good diary in language so quaintly his own, that a mere translation cannot hope to reproduce its nuances. There is food for reflection in the fact that what was written by this obscure clerk is of greater importance to posterity than all that has been preserved of the writings of the august and kind-hearted Governor, who pardoned him.

THE RELAAS OF JACOBUS COETSE JANSZ : 1760.

This is the narrative of the first European who is officially known to have crossed the Orange River. No contemporary copy of this Narration has been preserved in the Cape Archives. It was first published by Dr. Godée Molsbergen in 1916 in *Reizen in Z.A.*, Deel II, p. 18-22.⁵) It is at the present day possible to explore with ease Coetsé's route in South-West Africa by following the //Houm River (called by Coetsé the Leeuwen Rivier) from its Orange River junction to a little north of Warmbad, S.W.A. Coetsé could not write, but despite the stilted language in which his journey is reported by the Secretary of the Council of Policy, it is one of great interest. His report that he had heard of a people with long hair and wearing linen clothes gave rise, a year later, to the expedition of Hendrik Hop. The translation of this journal is topographically annotated.

THE JOURNAL OF MR. WILLEM VAN REENEN : 1791.

In 1889 there appeared in *Het Zuid-Afrikaansche Tijdschrift* two unsigned and unannotated articles entitled "*Uit de Archieven*" (From the Archives). The first of these was the Journal of Mr. Willem van Reenen. The document or manuscript in the Cape Archives, from which this journal had been transcribed, has been unknown for many years to those interested, in spite of

⁵) Transcribed from the contemporary copy in the Hague Archives (*Kol. Arch. No. 4206, fol. 236-241*).

dat ik na mijn zwakke vermoogen den Heere gebeden heeft.

Den 25 July heb ik met mijn pas by den veldwagt-meester¹⁵¹⁾ op de Kamusbergh Pieter van den Heever geweest, om dezelfde 't gemelde pas te laten onder-teekenen, dat ik daar gepasseert ben. Die avond een klyne schoft dees kant de Kamusbergh koomende trof ik aan de wagens van den heer capiteyn Gordon,¹⁵²⁾ maar hooggemelde heer was er zelfs niet by, maar was vooruyt te paarde gereeden na Peeter van den Heever, waar dat Hooggemelde heer hoorde, dat ik gister al gepasseert was. Daarom quam de heer Gordon den volgenden dag zijnde den 26 July agteruyt om myne rariteyten te zien, en om onderrigting van eenige affaires te krygen, die hooggemelde heer op zijn aangevange reys dienstig konden zijn, waartoe ik na mijn eenvoudigheid mijn uysterste vlijt aanwende om gemelde heer te dienen. Ik recommandeerde aan de heer Gordon ook mijn oude reyscamraat Claas Barend.¹⁵³⁾ De heer Gordon hadde graag my meegenoomen, maar ik was al op de weg na de Caap, en ik verzogt ook gemelde heer onderdanigst daarom, namelijk om my mijn reys na

¹⁵¹⁾ This office antedates that of the Field Cornet. The holder was usually a local farmer and the duties were mainly concerned with the recovery of cattle stolen by the Bushmen.

¹⁵²⁾ Colonel Robert Jacob Gordon, a Dutch Officer of Scots descent, arrived at the Cape in the service of the D.E. India Company in 1774. He made several inland journeys and is believed to have been the first European to visit the mouth of the Gariap or Great River, which he re-named the Orange River in August 1779, a month after his encounter with Wikar. Lieut. William Paterson who accompanied Gordon describes the scene: "In the evening we launched Colonel Gordon's boat and hoisted Dutch colours. Colonel Gordon proposed first to drink the State's health and then that of the Prince of Orange, and the

me would be the same here, as it had been there when I had prayed for it in the weakness of my powers.

On 25th July I touched at the farm of the *veldwagt-meester*¹⁵¹⁾ of the Kamusbergh, Pieter van den Heever, with my pass to get him to sign it, certifying that I had passed there. That evening when we came within a short stage this side of the Kamusbergh I met with the wagons of Captain Gordon,¹⁵²⁾ but that gentleman himself was not there, but had gone ahead on horseback to Pieter van den Heever, where the said gentleman was informed that I had passed the previous day. Consequently Mr. Gordon came back the following day, namely, the 26th July, to see my curiosities and to get information about some matters which might be useful to that gentleman on the journey he had begun. I did all in my power in my simple way to be of service to this gentleman.

I also recommended my old travelling companion, Claas Barend,¹⁵³⁾ to Mr. Gordon, who would very much have liked to take me along with him, but I was already on my way to the Cape and I humbly requested the afore-mentioned gentleman to allow me to proceed on

Company; after which he gave the river the name of Orange River, in honour of that Prince." *Narrative of Four Journeys into the Country of the Hottentots and Caffraria in the years 1777, 8, 9.* p. 103. Gordon took his own life at the Castle in Cape Town after the surrender of the Cape to the British in 1795. His valuable collection of prints and maps, known as the Gordon *Verzameling* (Collection) was not purchased by the Union of S.A. and is now in the *Prenten Kabinet* at Amsterdam. Memoranda and reports in his delicate handwriting are preserved in the Cape Archives.

¹⁵³⁾ Prof. Eduard Moritz states that Claas Barend in later years joined the Klaarwater Mission and was baptized on Oct. 29th. 1807, by the Missionary Anderson. (*Trans. London Missionary Soc. III.* (1813), p. 217.

de Caap te laten vervorderen, dat hooggemelde heer Gordon my gunstiglijk toestond.

De heer Patterzon ¹⁵⁴⁾ was ook in 't gezelschap van de heer Gordon. Hy heeft ook alles gezien en my na veel zaake gevraagd. Deeze byde heeren hebben my veel gunste beweezen, en my ook belooft, indien 't zijn kan, verders gunstig te weezen.

Tot besluit wil ik hiermeede U Wel Edel Gestreng onderdanigst om excuus verzoeken, dat dit mijn verhaal zo eenvoudig en ongereguleerd geschreeven is, eenige vreemde uytdrukzels die hier voorkoomen, zijn de naaste vertolkingen van dezelfde Hottentots woorden. Als ik van Uweedel Gestreng gunst mogte profiteeren om ter plaisiere en dienst van Uweedel Gestreng eene andere reyse landwaards in te moogen doen, zoude ik 't moogelijk beeter maaken.

Hiermeede wil ik fineeren na Uweedel Gestreng hooge perzoon en wyze raadslaagen in de bescherming van Jehovah bevoolen te hebben, zal ik voor een eere houden om met de diepste hoogangting te verblyven.

Wel Eedele Gestreng Heer

Uweedel zeer ootmoedigste en onderdanigste dienaar

HENDRIK JACOB WIKAR.

Cabo den 18 September

1779.

¹⁵⁴⁾ The *Relaas* reads: "On the road to the Cape at the Camusberg I met, on July 26th 1779, Capt. Gordon who was accompanied by the English botanist, Mr. Paterson, and Burger P. Pienaar . . . Capt. Gordon assured me again that my freedom was granted and fain would have taken me with him." Paterson refers to Wikar thus: "At noon we met a peasant who had come from the Great River, and was travelling towards the

my journey to the Cape, which Mr. Gordon graciously granted.

Mr. Patterson ¹⁵⁴⁾ was in Mr. Gordon's company. He also examined everything closely and questioned me about many matters. Both these gentlemen showed me many favours and promised to do me further favours if the opportunity arose.

In conclusion I hereby wish most humbly to beg pardon of Your Excellency that this account of mine is written so simply and unsystematically. Some strange expressions which occur in it are the nearest renderings of the equivalent Hottentot words.

If I might ever profit by Your Excellency's favour, and be permitted to make, at your pleasure and in your service, another journey inland I should possibly be able to do better.

With this I will end, after having commended Your Excellency's noble person and wise counsels to the protection of Jehovah.

I shall deem it an honour to remain with the deepest respect,

Your Excellency,

Your Excellency's most humble
and most obedient Servant,

HENDRIK JACOB WIKAR.

The Cape,

18th September, 1779.

Cape, accompanied by a deserter who had been seven years absent, and had travelled over a great part of the country. This poor fellow was a native of Sweden, and made many sensible reflections upon his misfortunes in Africa." *Op. cit.* p. 104. Paterson overstates the period Wikar was away.

Journal gehouden op de landtocht met voorkennisse der Hooge Overigheid alhier, in geselschap van Johan Christiaan Eyseloor, Adriaan Louw Adriaans, Barent Frijn, Frederik Wysman en Klaas van der Westhuizen, van Cabo de Goede Hoop, naar de Grootte Rivier, noordoosten aan de Grootte Rivier, noorden aan tot aan de Rhenius Bergh bij de natie genaamd Damras, begonnen de 17den September 1791 en volboerd den 20sten Junij 1792 te weten: *)

1791.

Den 17 September. Heeft den ondergeteek: Willem van Reenen zijne reise aangenoomen van de Caap med chais en vier paarden, in geselschap van voorsz. Eyseloor,^{1a)} na de plaads van Johannes van Nieuwkerk, geleege in de Koebergen; gereeden 5 uren.

18 do. Na 't Zwardland, ter plaatse van Jan Rusd, genaamd het Klijgat;²⁾ gereeden 7 uren.

19 do. Aldaar overgebleeven, wanneer Adriaan Louw, Adriaansz. by den ondergetd: is gekoomen om voorm. togt meede te doen.

* Volgens teks in *Bylagen, Verslag van Nederburgh en Frijkenius, Deel II.* (Kaapse Argief 696), p. 1041—1061.

¹⁾ Translated from *Bylagen, verslag van Nederburgh en Frijkenius, Tweede Deel*, p.p. 1041-61, *Kaapse Archief*, 696.

^{1a)} Mr. van Reenen's companion was Johan Christiaan Eisenlohr, apothecary to the regiment of Württemberg. This regiment of mercenaries had been stationed here since 1787 and left the Cape on Sept. 4th 1791. Eisenlohr had remained, having received permission to accompany van Reenen. In October 1793 Eisenlohr was in bitter poverty in Cape Town and, assisted by Capt. J. C. F. von Hügel, applied to the Governor Sluysken and Council of Policy for burger rights. His petition states that he had

Journal kept on the inland journey (with fore-knowledge of the High Authorities here) from Cabo de Goede Hoop to the Grootte Rivier, north-eastward of the Grootte Rivier and north to the Rhenius Bergh and the nation called Damras, in company with Johan Christiaan Eyseloor, Adriaan Louw (Adriaan's son), Barent Frijn, Frederik Wysman and Klaas van der Westhuizen. Commenced on September the 17th, 1791, and completed June the 20th, 1792, as follows: ¹⁾

1791.

17th September. The undersigned, Willem van Reenen, commenced his journey with chaise and four horses, accompanied by the aforesaid Eyseloor,^{1a)} from the Cape to the farm of Johannes van Nieuwkerk situated in the Koebergen. Journeyed for 5 hours.

18th do. To the Zwartland, to the farm of Jan Rusd named the Klijgat;²⁾ rode 7 hours.

19th do. Remained there, when Adriaan Louw (Adriaan's son) joined the undersigned to take part in the aforementioned journey.

never received his half share of the ore which had been brought back by van Reenen and himself. He had arrived at Cape Town from the journey on July 28th 1792. He enclosed a signed certificate supplied him by van Reenen to the effect that copper ore, some thousand pounds in weight, had been given by them, on their return, to the authorities. [*Bijlagen* 1793, Vol. 212 (C), pp. 61-3.]

²⁾ Rooode Kleygat, near Malmesbury; permit for grazing and water to the Widow Vermeij in 1727. *Oude Wildschutten Boek*. No. 120. *Cape Archives*.

waaren [dezelve die van de verrekte over gebleeven waaren] zeer maager en armoedig, terwijl zijn vrouw van de Modderfontein na de Kaap en weder na huis neegen maanden toegebragd had op de reise. En om mijn reise dan wijders Caabwaards voord te zetten was ik in de noodzakelijkhijd om ses van mijn beste schiedgeweeren te verruijlen voor ossen, bovendien van hun lieden geleend tot aan de Corregaas by Barend Freijn.

Inmiddels van mijn vierdaagsche trek van de Modderfontein den basterd Hottentot in naame Solomon Kok by mij gekomen, brengende mij 30 goede trekossen en wijders mij verzeld agd daagen reisens, vervolgens door Barend Freijn geholpen tot op de Camiesbergen met ossen.

Op deeze her en derwaards reizen zijn doodgeschoten 65 renosteren en 6 cameelpaarden en in geval dit geluk niet getroffen hadden, zo zouden de togd-geselschap gevaar geloopen hebben van honger te sterven. Door Gideon Visagie is aan den ondergeteekende voor reise provisie meede gegeven elf beesten en twintig schaapen en thien beesten van de basterds van Modderfontein op hoop daarmede te zullen strekken. Denzelven Numacquas capitain die den ondergeteekende heeft aangedaan en de Hottentotten van den ondergeteekende vermoord, bragten aan my drie slagdbeesten en vier schaapen met verontschuldiging dad het zijn jaegers gedaan hadden en dat ze nu gevlugd zijn. Bij mijn terugkomst aan de Nieuwe of Nieuwe Jaarsrivier heeft zig een Numacquas capitain laten vinden met naam van Noubels thans hernaamd van de basterd Hotten-

condition because his wife had taken nine months on the journey from the Modderfontein to the Cape and back home again. In order to further my journey back to the Cape I was obliged to exchange six of my best guns for oxen, in addition to those I had borrowed from these people to get as far as the Corregaas, to where Barend Freijn was.

During my four-day journey from Modderfontein the half-breed Hottentot named Solomon Kok joined me bringing 30 good trek-oxen, and moreover accompanied me for eight days; after this I was helped by Barend Freijn with oxen as far as the Camiesberg.

On these journeys there and back 65 rhinoceroses were killed and 6 giraffes. If the party of travellers had not met with this good fortune they would have run the risk of dying of hunger. Gideon Visagie gave to the undersigned eleven head of cattle and twenty sheep for food on the journey, and ten head of cattle belonging to the Bastards of Modderfontein in the hope that they would be sufficient.

The same Captain of the Numacquas who attacked the undersigned and who murdered the undersigned's Hottentots, brought to me three head of slaughter cattle and four sheep with the excuse that his hunters were the guilty persons and that they had now fled. On my return, at the New or New Year's River, a Numacqua Captain, whose name was Noubels, now re-