

РОССИЯ – АФРИКА

FROM MOSCOW TO THE VOC CAPE: FAMILY LINKS BETWEEN RESIDENTS OF RUSSIA AND SOUTHERN AFRICA IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

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Abstract. The Swellengrebel family is known in South Africa in connection with Hendrik Swellengrebel, the only local-born governor of the Cape Colony. Using Russian and Dutch archival sources as well as comprehensive studies of the Dutch merchant communities in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Moscow and Archangel, we traced the transformation of this family from Pomeranian clothiers into leading Russian arms importers and Cape agriculturalists. The earliest-known correspondence between residents of Russia and the Cape, the letters from Heinrich Swellengrebel in Moscow to his son in Cape Town, was also studied. We established that the Amsterdam burgomaster and friend of Peter I, Nicolaes Witsen, was a patron of Johannes Swellengrebel, a native of Russia and the first Swellengrebel who settled at the Cape. Having achieved a high social status in Russia and at the Cape, members of Swellengrebel family gravitated towards Western Europe, their ancestral homeland. The history of this family reveals “the hidden thread” of human interaction that connected Russia with southern Africa long before the establishment of formal trade and political relations.

Keywords: Russian-South African contacts, Russian-Dutch trade, VOC Cape, social identity, seventeenth century, eighteenth century, Nicolaes Witsen, Hendrik Swellengrebel, Swellengrebel family

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A common misconception

In his popular history of Dutch administration at the Cape, Hymen Picard pointed out the long-held misconception that the only local-born governor of the Cape, Hendrik Swellengrebel, was of Russian descent [1, p. 138]. The notion that the Swellengrebel family had identified themselves as Russian originated from authoritative sources. George McCall Theal believed that the governor’s father, Johannes Swellengrebel, “was a Russian, born at Moscow” [2, p 507]. A similar assertion was made in the *South African Dictionary of National Biography* [3, p. 369]. Moreover, in the 1930s Dutch publication of a Swellengrebel memoir, Johannes’s name was given as “Ivan”, in the Russian manner [4, p. 1].

The governor’s ethnic background was Germanic, not Slavic; he never visited Russia. His ethnic, cultural and national identities were Dutch. Nevertheless, it seems wrong to

assume, as Picard did, that ‘no other impressions influenced his youth than those of the Cape of Good Hope’ [1, p. 138]. We shall consider Apollon Davidson’s conjecture: the “Kaapse Hendrik” knew more about Russia than most Cape colonists because of his family’s connection with that country [5, p. 95]. There was never a Russian settler community at the Cape under Dutch East India Company (VOC) rule, and no direct business or transport links between Russia and the Cape existed [6, pp. 3, 12; 7, pp. 129–130]. However, the history of the Swellengrebel family in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries reveals “the hidden thread”¹ of human interaction that connected Russia with southern Africa long before the establishment of formal trade and political relations.

The origins of this family and the ancestry of its Russian and Cape branches have been studied in detail by genealogists [8, pp. 372–388]. The Swellengrebel’s contribution to the colonial society at the Cape has also been thoroughly investigated, particularly by G.J. Schutte in his publications of documents from the family archive. Johannes Swellengrebel’s emigration from Russia to the Cape was documented in his correspondence with his father in Moscow and in his brief autobiography [9]. However, the Swellengrebel’s contribution to Russian foreign trade was not studied individually, and their transformation from Pomeranian clothiers into Russian arms importers and Cape winegrowers was not explored consistently either by Russian scholars or by historians from other countries.

Using Russian and Dutch archival material as well as comprehensive studies of the Dutch merchant communities in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Moscow, Archangel and Saint Petersburg, we traced and analysed this transformation and the corresponding radical changes in the Swellengrebel’s cultural, national and, most important, ethnic identities within a century. Among the primary sources that we studied were the earliest-known examples of correspondence between residents of Russia and the Cape. The letters from Heinrich Swellengrebel in Moscow to his son Johannes in Cape Town travelled from the old Russian capital northwards to the port on the White Sea, westwards to the Low Countries and then southwards aboard VOC vessels.

From Pomerania to Moscow in search of social mobility

The Swellengrebel family spread from the German-speaking town of Stettin, near the Baltic Sea, to other countries and continents along with the expansion of European commerce in the early modern period. The family is of German extraction, and its roots can be found in Thuringia [8, p. 372]. Heinrich Schwellengrebel, the youngest child of a woollen draper from Stettin, was born in 1626. By the age of seventeen, he had already left his Pomeranian homeland [8, p. 384]. Residents of Stettin, which was occupied by Sweden and often contested by the empire’s enemies, suffered hardship throughout the Thirty Years’ War. It was during that long and devastating conflict that Heinrich Swellengrebel moved to Russia to engage in the Moscow and Archangel trade.

Russia was a “social springboard” for men from Western Europe. Russian goods were in demand, therefore the country offered ample opportunities for entrepreneurship. Rich merchants in the Netherlands tended to avoid visiting Russia or sending their close relatives there. Instead, they employed young Dutchmen or Germans from less prosperous families, who either travelled to that country each year or resided there permanently [10, pp. 374–375].

Heinrich’s elder brothers had tried to establish themselves as merchants in Russia: Gottfried evidently failed and returned to Stettin; Erdmann succeeded [8, pp. 383–384]. The latter travelled to Russia since the mid 1630s as an employee of Amsterdam merchants, the Benarts brothers, who had received permission from the Russian government to conduct

¹ The expression is borrowed from the title of Apollon Davidson and Irina Filatova’s book *The Hidden Thread: Russia and South Africa in the Soviet Era* (Johannesburg. Jonathan Ball Publishers. 2013).

business in various parts of the country. Having joined the Benarts at the age of eighteen, Erdmann spent several months in Russia every year under the supervision of their local agent, Hendricks Haeck.

Heinrich arrived in Russia in 1643, when his brother's contract with the Benarts was about to expire. It is possible that Heinrich was also their employee, not only because his brother still worked for the company but also because his business relations with Haeck's family lasted into the next decade [10, p. 256]. In Russia, it was customary to use Russian equivalents of foreign names, which is why Heinrich became known as "Andrey". He was referred to by this name in Russian government documents.

Becoming Dutch

With Baltic harbours under Swedish control, a northern town of Archangel (Arkhangelsk) near the White Sea functioned as Russia's "window to the West". It was a convenient port for ships carrying goods between Russia and Western Europe. European merchants negotiated and concluded deals with their Russian counterparts only in person. Archangel was their meeting place, particularly, during the annual fairs. A large share of the Russian state budget consisted of profits from the exports of government-owned goods from Archangel as well as from taxes and duties levied on transactions between Russian and European merchants in that town [11, pp. 80–81, 145].

By 1650, Heinrich and Erdmann were doing business together in Archangel [11, p. 178]. The buying and selling of every Russian export commodity were dominated by the Dutch, whose ships plied between Amsterdam and Archangel [12, p. 263]. As the brothers entered on their career in Russia with merchants from the Netherlands, it was to their advantage to continue their alliance with the Dutch. Heinrich Swellengrebel developed his business links through his membership in the Dutch expatriate community. He adopted the Dutch version of his German name (Hendrik) and omitted the 'ch' in his surname; the Russian spelling reflected the original pronunciation until the 1720s when his son brought it into line.² However, the style of Heinrich's correspondence indicates that his Dutch was always strongly influenced by his native German [9, pp. 28, 30]. It appears that his association with the Dutch was mostly pragmatic: he identified himself as a German until the end of his life [9, p. 43].

A prominent Amsterdam merchant who traded with Russia was Nicolaes Ruts; he commissioned Rembrandt to do his portrait in 1631. The painting was inherited by his granddaughter in Moscow, Susanna Catharina Ruts³. The latter married Heinrich Swellengrebel in 1653, and this union confirmed his integration into the Dutch community. His father-in-law, David Ruts, was a merchant trading in partnership with other Dutch businessmen; his mother-in-law, Maria de Moucheron, belonged to a family renowned for their engagement in the Northern Netherlands shipping to the East [11, p. 177]. Heinrich's brother-in-law in this marriage was Johan van Sweeden, who had first come to Moscow on a contract with the Ruts family as a wine cooper and later taught winemaking in the south of Russia on the tsar's instructions [11, p. 178].

Russia's main importers of firearms

Russia did not yet produce modern weaponry in the large volumes needed to come up against such formidable adversaries as Sweden or the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The

² Russian State Archives of Ancient Acts (hereafter RGADA): f. 150, op. 1, 1706, d. 7, pp. 1–2; f. 158, op. 2, 1712, d. 96; 1713, d. 86, pp. 1–4.

³ According to the inventory of Annetgen van Apperlo, widow of Nicolaes Ruts. Amsterdam Municipal Archives (hereafter GA Amsterdam), inv. 468.

ability of merchants from the Netherlands to organise steady supplies of arms and military equipment from Western Europe was a prime reason why the Dutch continued to dominate the Russian foreign trade throughout the seventeenth century [13, p. 168].

Swellengrebel and Van Sweeden collaborated to import European weapons into Russia. The war with Poland led to an increased demand for firearms and ammunition, and from 1659 to 1662, the partners were the largest suppliers of weapons for the Russian army [11, p. 179; 12, p. 81; 15, p. 44]. Swellengrebel and Van Sweeden brought into Russia at least 75 000 muskets, 30 000 carbines, 34 000 pairs of pistols as well as swords and shells [11, p. 179]. They negotiated in Hamburg and the Netherlands as official emissaries of the tsar [16, p. 185]. Heinrich's brother Erdmann also took part in this business. In the early 1660s, together with Heinrich, he delivered tens of thousands of firearms on a government contract [15, p. 44]. Heinrich's twin brother, Matthias Schwellengrebel, a merchant in Amsterdam, also purchased muskets and banderols for the Russian army [16, p. 185]⁴.

Apart from importing weaponry, Heinrich brought veterans of European wars, who were recruited as officers for the modernising Russian army, particularly during the Russo-Polish War of 1654–1667. One of the mercenaries enlisted by Heinrich Swellengrebel in the early 1660s was Lodewyck Fabritius, a future Swedish ambassador to Iran [17, p. 14].

Swellengrebel and Van Sweeden went separate ways in the early 1660s. Perhaps their business was affected by the monopoly which the Russian government established in 1662 on commodities that Swellengrebel and Van Sweeden exported to the Netherlands. That year alone, the brothers-in-law committed to send overseas over 100 000 roubles' worth of these goods [12, p. 263]. Although they preferred barter to payments in deflated copper in their dealings with Russians, Swellengrebel and Van Sweeden were affected by the acute financial crisis of the early 1660s [12, p. 81]. Their problems with payments in connection with arms trade remained unsolved for years afterwards.

In 1665, the Dutch envoy to Moscow, Jacob Boreel, delivered his government's request to the tsar to assist in settling a dispute between two Amsterdam merchants, on the one hand, and Van Sweeden and the Swellengrebel brothers, on the other [13, p. 208; 16, pp. 186–187]. Van Sweeden and Swellengrebel had bought a large volume of commodities that was monopolised by the Russian government and sold them to the Amsterdam merchants. The latter exported the goods but failed to pay the amount due. Seeking justice in Russia, the partners had the authorities search the homes of the agents of the Dutch merchants in Archangel and confiscate their property. Boreel attached utmost importance to this dispute. However, despite the envoy's efforts, the Russian authorities continued to support Van Sweeden and Swellengrebel in this case [18, p. XXXVIII].

After the dissolution of the partnership with Van Sweeden, Heinrich Swellengrebel imported and supplied broadcloth to the Russian government in exchange for potash, becoming the principal buyer of this industrial chemical among the European merchants in Russia in 1654 [12, p. 263]. The country needed this fabric for army uniforms; however, the local production was insufficient. As payment, he also accepted sable fur and Russia leather [11, p. 179; 15, p. 48]. A son of a woollen draper, Heinrich used his family's connections in the textile industry to obtain large quantities of broadcloth, which he continued to import into Russia in the 1660s. His brother George in Amsterdam was a cloth merchant, who had business dealings both with Heinrich and Erdmann in Moscow and with their two merchant brothers in Stettin (Gottfried became a burgomaster of their native town in the 1670s) [8, p. 382; 9, p. 28].

By 1675, Heinrich Swellengrebel had become a victim of a blaze. Most structures in Russian cities and towns were made of wood, which caught fire easily. A burning warehouse

⁴ GA Amsterdam: Notariaat, Matthias Swellengrebel, 20 March 1642; Begraven Westerkerk, Amsterdam, Matthaeus Swellengrebel, aan de Keizersgracht, 20 September 1667.

would often be plundered by neighbours and other residents. After that incident, which led to his financial ruin, Swellengrebel had an audience with the tsar [17, p. 116].⁵ In appreciation of his earlier services to the treasury, Swellengrebel was soon appointed guardian of the Armoury [15, p. 52]. As a salaried employee, he oversaw the workings of large government stores of firearms and ammunition, and repair shops opposite the Kremlin. In 1687, the contents of the stores were moved inside the Kremlin and entrusted to other managers. The 61-year-old Heinrich Swellengrebel was dismissed; he spent the rest of his life in retirement [19, pp. 1–10].

The second generation in Russia

Heinrich had seven children, all born in Moscow. His daughters married European merchants in the Russian capital. Balthasar, Hendrik and Johannes were from his second marriage to a daughter of the Lutheran minister in Moscow [8, p. 384].

The second son, Hendrik Swellengrebel, identified himself as Dutch although he was born in Russia and resided there all his life. Like his father, he used the Dutch version of his name, spoke Dutch with his family and married a Dutch woman, Anna Geertruida Cannegieter. In the 1680s, Hendrik went into commerce, possibly in collaboration with his elder brother, Balthasar, who relocated to the Netherlands [8, p. 385; 11, p. 207]. It appears that Hendrik worked for Dutch merchants in Moscow and Archangel and travelled to Lubeck, Hamburg and Amsterdam on business [9, p. 51]. By the 1700s, he had started trading independently, supplying expensive west European textiles to the Russian court and nobility. Probably he was introduced to that speciality by his father-in-law, Kunrat Cannegieter, who imported silk fabrics through Archangel [11, p. 207].

In the early eighteenth century, the Swellengrebels were among the eight Dutch merchant families represented in Archangel who had settled in Russia before Peter the Great came to power [20, p. 52]. In 1713, the Leeuw brothers, Amsterdam merchants who had dealt with the Swellengrebel family before, appointed Hendrik as their agent. He proposed to sell their goods in Russia and to offer his Russian merchandise to the Leeuws for sale in Amsterdam. The Dutch merchants started sending sabres and sabre blades, lemons and ginger, dyes and fabrics to Swellengrebel in Archangel. However, in four years, the Leeuws broke off their business relations with Swellengrebel. A possible reason was unfavourable market conditions: the Leeuws imported luxury items into Russia when the prices for such goods in that country were comparatively low [11, pp. 207–208, 212].

In the late 1720s, Hendrik Swellengrebel in alliance with five Russian entrepreneurs gained a monopoly from the Russian government over the purchase and export of Atlantic salmon [20, p. 132]. They exercised their privilege for several years. This was Swellengrebel's last known achievement in commerce; afterwards, he went into civil service. His decision may be explained by the weakening of the Dutch merchants' grip on Russian foreign trade. Although almost half of Archangel exports still went to the Netherlands in the early eighteenth century, the Dutch dominance was being challenged by competitors from Hamburg and Great Britain. Besides, from the early 1720s, Peter the Great restricted the foreign trade through Archangel, where the Swellengrebels had a firm foothold for over half a century, in favour of the new capital city, Saint Petersburg, with its direct access to the Baltic Sea.

A new beginning in Russia's new capital

The family moved to Saint Petersburg. In 1721, they sold their Moscow house with a garden on the corner of Sverchkov and Devyatkin lanes, north of Pokrovka Street.

⁵ RGADA, f. 150, op. 1, 1676, d. 2, p. 5.

A portion of the stand had belonged to Heinrich Swellengrebel at least since the 1660s and was bequeathed to his son and namesake.⁶ After the sale, the property changed hands several times until, in 1889, it was purchased by an uncle of Alexander and Fyodor Guchkov, Russian volunteers who fought on the republican side in the Second Anglo-Boer War.

In Saint Petersburg, Hendrik was appointed councillor of the Collegium of Commerce, the government institution in charge of internal and external trade of the Russian Empire. It also coordinated the development of Russian manufacturing industries. From the early 1730s, “Andrey Swellengrebel” (the Russian version of Hendrik’s name) featured among signatories of the collegium petitions and reports to the Senate or the Cabinet [22, p. 119; 23, pp. 340, 367; 24, p. 318]. He successfully opposed the collegium’s motion to prohibit European traders from dealing directly with medium and small merchants in the Russian domestic market in 1736, although he failed to persuade the senators to allow Russian merchants to sign agreements with foreigners for the supply of goods from abroad without government participation [20, pp. 426–427]. His last known position, before his death in 1742, was *ober-kommissar* in the Saint Petersburg treasury. This rank in the Russian civil service was equivalent to the colonel’s in the Russian army [25, p. 365].

Hendrik Swellengrebel was survived by five children, the most prominent among them being Peter Conrad who took over the family business. Peter married his first cousin, Marta Kusel, and so, although he was a third generation living in Russia, he upheld the Swellengrebel tradition of finding life partners only among non-Russians [8, p. 386]. Religion was an important reason for their unwillingness to marry Russians: the latter were Orthodox, and the Swellengrebels belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Peter was the first Swellengrebel in Russia to identify himself as English rather than German or Dutch. As the Dutch Baltic trade was declining steadily, British merchant ships at Saint Petersburg exceeded the Dutch ones in the 1720s. Traders from the Netherlands continued to dominate the Archangel trade, but their preponderance in the Russian market had ended [26, p 483]. In 1734, Russia granted privileges to subjects of King George II, and some West European merchants in that country were naturalised as British to have those benefits. Apparently, this applied to Peter Swellengrebel, who operated in partnership with Daniel Willem Middendorf. Unlike other English merchants in Russia who mostly exported hemp, they also sent abroad tallow, hemp oil and other commodities that were marketable in German-speaking countries [20, pp. 101–102, 447, 634]. In addition, they were known to import wine from Lubeck [27, p. 97].

Although Peter Swellengrebel exported his goods through Saint Petersburg, he signed contracts with his Russian suppliers in Moscow, which was typical of old European merchant dynasties in that country. The export was mainly handled by his companion, Middendorf, in the new capital of Russia [20, p. 449]. They did not rank among the foremost British merchants operating in Russia, chartering up to nine ships per year, and their partnership was dissolved in 1758 [20, pp. 568–569]. The demise could be a result of the ongoing Seven Years’ War and the fierce competition from newcomers. Few of the European merchants who had started trading in Russia before the ascension to the throne of the Empress Elizabeth, a daughter of Peter the Great, in 1741, survived the changes in the market conditions and in the ruling elites, as well as the loss of the old links to the court and the treasury. Nothing is known about Peter Swellengrebel’s later life: perhaps the family business in Russia, established by Heinrich Swellengrebel over a century before, ended in the 1760.

⁶ RGADA, f. 125, op. 2, 1669, d. 66.

Nicolaes Witsen's protégé at the Cape

Heinrich Swellengrebel's third son, Johannes, the future founder of the South African branch of the family, was born in Moscow in 1671. His mother was Heinrich's second wife, Elisabeth Fademrecht, a daughter of the Lutheran pastor in that city.

At first, Johannes seemed to follow in the footsteps of his elder brothers, merchants Hendrik and Balthasar. At seventeen, he travelled to Vologda and Archangel for business: his father Heinrich encouraged him to learn a trade to make a living in the future [9, p. 31]. Having left in 1688, Johannes never returned to Moscow or saw his parents again. After his training in Archangel, under his brother-in-law, a Moscow-born Dutch merchant Johannes Bacheracht, Swellengrebel went to Western Europe. He was employed as junior clerk by his uncle in Hamburg. Johannes also worked under Otto Rückert [9, p. 34]. In 1690, he moved to Amsterdam, where his brother, Balthasar, was already living and trading. Johannes spent another year as a junior clerk at the timber-merchant business of his aunt, a member of the Fademrecht family. The company was involved in the trade with Russia [9, pp. 57–58; 28, p. 80].

Promotion was not forthcoming, and Johannes decided that a young man had better prospects in the colonies. Heinrich, who continued to correspond with his son via Archangel, asked his old acquaintance, the mayor of Amsterdam Nicolaes Witsen, for letters of recommendation for Johannes. Witsen granted his request [9, p. 40].

From the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth century, Witsen represented a link between Russia and the Cape of Good Hope, his influence being underpinned by his high status as the Amsterdam treasurer and burgomaster, and a VOC administrator, and his friendship with Peter I [29, pp. 9–12]. It could be that Witsen was acquainted with the Swellengrebels since 1665, when he visited Moscow in the retinue of the Dutch envoy, Jacob Boreel. The Witsen family traded with Russia since the late sixteenth century, but it seems that the young Nicolaes was not interested in commerce and, during his encounters with leading merchants and other influential figures, he gathered information about Russia's judicial and political system, peoples and their customs. He met Johan van Sweeden and discussed the Transvolga, the territory beyond the River Volga that the Dutch merchant had evidently visited [30, pp. 373–388]. That journey sparked Witsen's fascination with Russia, which culminated in the scholarly work of his life, *Noord en Oost Tartaryen* (Amsterdam 1692, 1702).

The governor and other African Swellengrebels

In 1691, Johannes Swellengrebel left the Netherlands on a VOC ship bound for the East. He was the first Swellengrebel to join the Company, soon to be followed by other members of his family. On arrival at the Cape, he showed letters of recommendation from his Dutch patrons. Evidently, the endorsement from Witsen the Cape governor's attention to Johannes, who was swiftly appointed assistant to the General Secretary.

As a VOC clerk, Johannes went to Madagascar to buy slaves and later served as a bookkeeper on several company ships in the war against the French fleet near India and Ceylon. On his return to the Cape, Swellengrebel was appointed to the Council of Policy (1698). Through his membership in the Council of Justice and the Council of Policy, Swellengrebel had amassed sufficient capital to own one of the largest vineyards in the colony [9, p. 61; 31, p. 192 (note)].

Witsen had recommended Johannes as a valuable employee of the Company and reiterated his willingness to do so towards the end of his life [9, p. 62]. In their correspondence, Witsen referred to Johannes Swellengrebel, a Cape official, thirty years his junior, as his "special friend" (*bijsondere vrint*). Their 'friendship' was the relation between a

patron and his client. As the son of an old acquaintance related to the Fademrecht and the Meyer families, well-known Amsterdam merchants trading with Russia, Johannes Swellengrebel easily obtained Witsen's patronage. The protégé lived in the Netherlands for just over a year and had little chance of seeing his patron afterwards, but they carried on their correspondence at least until 1715, two years before Witsen's death.

However, Witsen was unable to protect him from the persistent complaints of the Cape burghers. The patron intervened when Johannes Swellengrebel was being urged to resign from his post, having acquired vast land holdings and engaged in wine production, which was forbidden to the company's staff [32, p. 5]. Rather than selling the land, as he was ordered to do by the VOC, Johannes Swellengrebel stood down. After two decades in the company's employ, he became a free-burgher in 1716. His Cape-born wife, Johanna Cruse, was a daughter of a colonial explorer and commander of the local garrison. They had seven children. One of their daughters married Rijk Tulbagh, the governor of the Cape Colony in 1751–1771 [8, p. 387]. Apart from the several years in Asia in the 1690s, Johannes spent the rest of his life at the Cape, where he died in 1744.

Swellengrebel named his eldest son Hendrik (b. 1700) after his own father, who had passed away in Moscow a year before. A native of the Cape, Hendrik dedicated his entire career to the VOC, starting as an assistant at the age of thirteen. In 1739, thanks to the influence of his patrons in Amsterdam and to his financial contributions, Hendrik Swellengrebel became governor of the colony [32, p. 26]. The new town and district of Swellendam was named after Hendrik Swellengrebel and his wife, Helena Wilhelmina ten Damme.

Besides Johannes Swellengrebel, other direct descendants of Heinrich's set foot at the Cape in the eighteenth century. Sergius, the eldest son of Balthasar Swellengrebel, first arrived there from the Netherlands in 1712. At the time of his death, in 1760, he was vice-governor (*secunde*) under his cousin's successor, Rijk Tulbagh [33]. Heinrich Swellengrebel's youngest son, Benjamin, born and brought up in Moscow like Balthasar and Johannes, sailed to the Cape as a VOC midshipman and, after a brief stay in the colony, obtained a clerical position in Batavia in 1710, where he died soon afterwards [34, p. 962]. Heinrich's grandson, Thomas Swellengrebel, whose father was the Moscow merchant and councillor of the Collegium of Commerce Hendrik Swellengrebel, left Russia to enlist with the VOC. He was appointed to the Cape Colony in 1739 and became secretary of the Council of Policy and member of the Committee for Marital Affairs [8, p. 386]. Another grandson of Heinrich who started his VOC career at the Cape was Johannes Bacheracht, born in Archangelsk, who arrived 1739 as *adelborst* and held various clerical positions [33, pp. 37–38].

The male descendants of those people eventually left the Cape. Not even the 'Kaapse Hendrik' remained in the colony: on retirement from the governor's post in 1751, Hendrik Swellengrebel emigrated to the Netherlands. Although the family conducted correspondence with their relatives at the Cape, he never revisited his homeland [33]. None of his children came back to live at the Cape, although his son and namesake travelled widely in the colony in 1776–1777 and was once seen as a potential successor to Cape governor Baron Joachim van Plettenberg [35; 36]. Hendrik Swellengrebel's brothers relocated emigrated as well. The governor's descendants still reside in the Netherlands.

Conclusion

On Heinrich Swellengrebel's death in 1699, Hendrik became heir to his estate as his only adult son residing in Russia. Of Hendrik's sons, only Peter lived and died in that country, but he had no male heirs [8, p. 386]. We found no evidence that a direct male descendant of Heinrich's or that of his brothers lived in Russia permanently after the 1770s. Thus, we

assume that the original Russian branch of the Swellengrebel family had petered out by the end of the eighteenth century.

Nothing suggests that members of the Swellengrebel family were apt to assimilate in Russia. They married only non-Russian Protestants. Although Russians called them by local equivalents of their Germanic names, the Swellengrebels continued to sign their letters with their original names in Latin, not Cyrillic, letters.⁷ Their petitions to the Russian authorities were written in Russian, but those could be translations. Their surviving private letters were either in German or in Dutch, their home languages. Even Peter, the third generation of the family in Moscow, conducted business there as a foreigner.

The Dutch saw Russia as a place where young people from families of moderate means could do well for themselves or even prosper thanks to the country's brisk trade with the Netherlands. When they improved their situation, they tended to return to western Europe and stop focusing exclusively on Russian imports [10, pp. 374–375]. Therefore, three out of the four sons of Heinrich Swellengrebel emigrated to the Netherlands or to the Dutch colonies. While Heinrich regarded his family as German, his children considered themselves Dutch, and a grandson of Heinrich's in Russia identified himself as English. It appears that none of the Russian-born Swellengrebels assumed a Russian ethnic, cultural or national identity.

The Swellengrebels were integrated, formed part of the colonial society of the Cape – a society of settlers, people from various parts of Africa, Europe, Asia, a multicultural, multilingual and multiracial society. The local authorities put up no institutional barriers to assimilation of Dutch immigrants. Indeed, the Swellengrebels were not perceived as foreigners, and a member of the family attained the top government position at the Cape. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assert that “to Hendrik Swellengrebel the world was Table Valley” [1, p. 147]. Although the children of Johannes Swellengrebel were natives of the Cape, they heard their father’s stories of Russia. Johannes continued to correspond with his relatives in Moscow. Their relatives arriving at the Cape from Europe kept them informed about members of the Swellengrebel family who continued to live in Russia. Especially for the future governor, Johannes updated the family history that Heinrich had recorded in 1696 [9, p. 54]. Johannes’s children, including the governor, knew not only who their ancestors in Russia were but also when and why they settled in that country.

The changes in national, cultural and even ethnic identities of the Swellengrebel family in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries were caused by economic and social factors, such as the commercial advantages of being associated with the Dutch or the British in Russia. Members of that family regarded both Russia, a large sovereign state, and the Cape, a distant, relatively new colony, as the political and economic periphery. Their reference groups were neither Russians, nor expatriate Dutch and Germans in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, nor the Dutch-speaking settlers in southern Africa. The centrifugal force driving them to Russia and to the Cape was their need for upward social mobility. Once that need was filled, they gravitated towards the ‘centre’, which was, for them, western Europe.

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⁷ See, for example, Hendrik Swellengrebel’s petitions in the 1700s–1710s: RGADA, f. 150, op. 1, 1706, d. 7, pp. 1–2; f. 158, op. 2, 1712, d. 96; 1713, d. 86, pp. 1–4.

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ИЗ МОСКВЫ В КАПШАДТ. РОДСТВЕННЫЕ СВЯЗИ МЕЖДУ ЖИТЕЛЯМИ РОССИИ И ЮГА АФРИКИ В XVII–XVIII ВЕКАХ

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Аннотация. Семья Свелленгребелей известна, прежде всего, благодаря Гендику Свелленгребелю, единственному губернатору голландской Капской колонии, родившемуся на Юге Африки. Используя материалы российских и нидерландских архивов, и исследований общин голландских купцов в Москве и Архангельске XVII–XVIII вв., мы проследили, как Свелленгребели из Померании стали ведущими импортерами оружия в России, а также крупными землевладельцами и влиятельными чиновниками на Капском полуострове. Изучены самые ранние из сохранившихся образцов переписки между жителями России и Юга Африки – писем Генриха Свелленгребеля из Москвы к сыну в Капшадт. Установлено, что бургомистр Амстердама и друг Петра I Николаас Витсен был патроном первого представителя этой семьи на Юге Африки, иммигранта из России Йоханнеса Свелленгребеля. Достигнув высокого общественного положения в России и Капской колонии, члены семьи Свелленгребелей вернулись в Западную Европу. История этой семьи демонстрирует «тайную нить» человеческих контактов, которая связывала Россию с Югом Африки в ранее Новое время, задолго до установления официальных торговых и политических отношений.

Ключевые слова: российско-южноафриканские связи, русско-голландская торговля, Капская колония, социальная идентичность, XVII век, XVIII век, Николаас Витсен, Генрик Свелленгребель, семья Свелленгребелей

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