

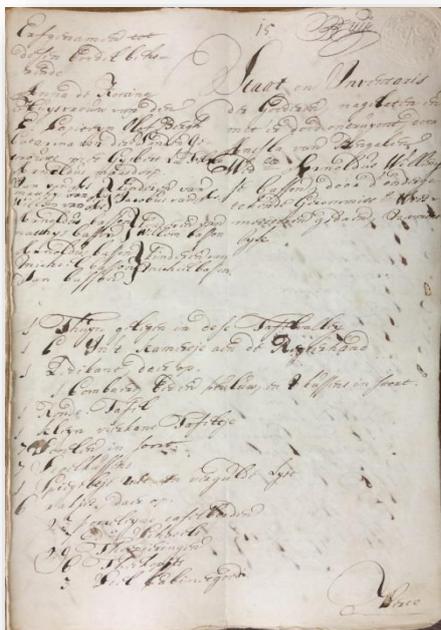


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Inventories

Estate inventories are drawn up upon the administration of a deceased person's estate, listing their property and belongings at their time of death, which may need to be auctioned or distributed. Inventories of deceased persons at the Cape dating back to 1673 can be found among the archives of the Master of the Orphan Chamber, which was later taken over by the Master's Office, and other archival series.

Historical household inventories are invaluable sources for researchers interested in the social and economic life of people in the past. Inventories generally include the name and marital status of the deceased and inheritors, the location of properties and lists of the person's household belongings including furniture, artworks, firearms, farm and artisan equipment and even livestock, itemised by room or building. Slaves appear often in the inventories of the late 17th – early 19th centuries. The names of slaves, their occupations, origins, ages, the condition of health, their children and sometimes belongings and living quarters are listed and mentioned in the inventories. Freed slaves appear as testators of their own inventories, sometimes listing slaves of their own among their property.



On the left is the first page of an inventory dated 1720 for Ansla van Bengalen (otherwise known as Angela van Bengale), widow of Arnoldus Willemse Basson (MOOC 8/4 15).

Angela is one of the most well-known freed slaves at the Cape, who after her husband died in 1689 inherited a substantial sum and was one of the first women to be granted land in her own name, a property on Heerengracht (Adderley) Street in Cape Town. By the time of her death in 1720 she had more than doubled her wealth and owned a small farm and seven slaves. Her daughter Anna de Koning, is listed as one of her heirs.

TANAP: Inventories of the Orphan Chamber of the Cape of Good Hope at www.tanap.net
'The First Slaves at the Cape' at www.sahistory.org.za