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IHSS Research Seminar Program 2025

The role of Dutch East India Company (VOC) interpreters in the contestation of VOC power during the Company's slave trading voyages in the 17th- and 18th-century Indian Ocean

Michael Reidy (PhD Candidate, ACU)

Chairs: Assoc. Prof. Nell Musgrove (NSAH) & Dr. Sarah Bendall (IHSS)

Thursday 13 March, 12-1pm AEDT

To be held in MEL-421.7.11, level 7, St Teresa, 115b Victoria Parade, Fitzroy VIC 3065 and online via Teams

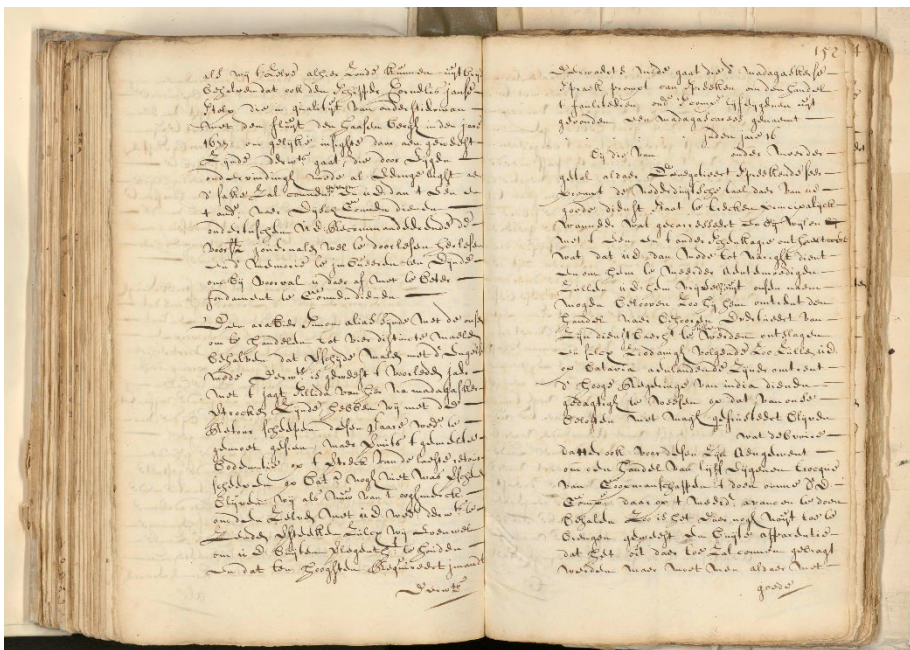


Image from the VOC's Overgekomen brieven en papieren from the Cape of Good Hope. Instruction on the use of translators (tolken) for the Company's slave trading voyage on the Eemlandt in 1683.

This presentation discusses the agency, activities and achievements of interpreters or *tolken* during the VOC's slave trading voyages on the northwestern coast of Madagascar and at a number of coastal sites in East Africa during the 17th and 18th centuries. My thesis attempts to reconfigure the role of the Company's 'peripheral intermediaries' (castaways, pilots and local people) and translators or interpreters in the history of the Company's slave trading voyages. It brings the activities and agency of

intermediaries, often invisible, to the foreground of the intermediated encounters which they participated in. My analysis of the role of intermediaries in the contestation of VOC power – my overarching research question – is supported by visible case studies which examine the power relations between VOC intermediaries, elites, Indigenous intermediaries and enslaved people on the fringes of the Company's trading empire

Bio: [Michael Reidy](#) is a PhD candidate at ACU's National School of the Arts. He completed his Confirmation of Candidature milestone in September last year and is now writing the first chapters of his thesis.