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Extracting information from the Dutch East India Company 'Dagboeken' (day books) to reconstruct 17th and 18th C weather and climate for the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa

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The 'day registers' (dagboeken) of the Dutch East India Company in the Cape Colony are unequalled in early modern history for their rigorous documentation of daily life over the course of nearly 150 years (1652 to 1795) of Dutch presence in southern Africa. Each register details a wide range of human activity (trade activity, politics, diet, diplomacy etc) and environmental observation (e.g. daily weather phenomena). This poster aims to:1) provide a brief overview on the process and progress of digitization of the 'day registers', 2) provide an overview of the VOC context in the 'Kaap de Goede Hoop', and 3) reveal the enormous value of the registers through their detailed summary of daily weather conditions at the Cape. We demonstrate how descriptive accounts on weather may be used toward building a more quantitative weather chronology. This essentially contributes to the longest and oldest known daily documentary-derived weather record in the southern hemisphere. In addition, daily accounts of shipping activities at the Cape permit detailed assessment on how shipping and trade was impacted by weather through the 17th and 18th centuries, combining quantitative methods with qualitative descriptions of everyday life at the Cape in a global context. We provide more specific examples of the Cape weather and climate between 1780 and 1789, based on such records. Findings for this period suggest possibly strong but temporally delayed volcanic forcing impacts on the Cape climate.