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Slavery in a »Slave Free Enclave«?

Historical Links Between the Dutch Republic, Empire and Slavery, 1580s–1860s

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Forced labour was a crucial factor in the Dutch global economic and political empire of the early modern period.¹ Throughout the world, the Republic made its presence felt through its navy, its private merchants and its chartered trading companies, often operating on a thin line between engaging in trade and waging war.² This world of war and slavery not only manifested itself overseas, but also in Dutch ports in Europe and beyond.³ This observation fits uneasily with the optimistic assessment of the Dutch Republic as the »first modern economy« that was characterised by free labour markets, the right economic and political institutions and sustained economic growth.⁴ The one-sided and ideologically-charged emphasis on the role of freedom and stable institutions that promoted the economic and political development of the Republic is part of the neoliberal rewriting of European history. The tendency to define, in a teleological fashion, the origins of present day free and market oriented models of economic growth and liberal democratic institutions clouds our understanding of the role that various types of coercion played in the making of the modern

- 1 Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade. 1600–1815*, Cambridge 1990; Johannes Postma, *A Reassessment of the Dutch Atlantic Slave Trade*, in: Johannes Postma/Victor Enthoven (Ed.), *Riches From Atlantic Commerce. Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, Leiden 2003; Henk den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven. Scheepvaart en handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op Afrika, 1674–1740*, Leiden 1997; Kwame Nimako/Glenn Willemssen, *The Dutch Atlantic. Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, London 2011.
- 2 Femme S. Gaastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC*, Zutphen 2007; Henk den Heijer, *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, Zutphen 2007; Jaap R. Bruijn, *The Dutch Navy of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Columbia 1993.
- 3 Raymond Buve, *Surinaamse Slaven en Vrije Negers in Amsterdam Gedurende de Achttiende Eeuw*, in: *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 119 (1963) 1, pp. 8–17; Gert Oostindie/ Emy Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser II. Antillianen en Surinamers in Nederland, 1634/1667–1954*, *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Dordrecht 1986; Dienne Hondius, *Blacks in Early Modern Europe. New Research from the Netherlands*, in: Darlene Clark Hine/Tricia Danielle Keaton/Stephen Small (Ed.), *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*, Urbana 2009, pp. 29–47. Leo Balai, *Geschiedenis van de Amsterdamse slavenhandel*, Zutphen 2013.
- 4 See for example the explanations of economic growth in Joël Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena. Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy*, Princeton 2002; Jan L. van Zanden, *The Long Road to the Industrial Revolution. The European Economy in a Global Perspective*, Leiden 2009; James A. Robinson/Daron Acemoglu, *Why Nations Fail. The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*, London 2012. For the »West« in general this has been put even more strongly for example in Niall Ferguson, *Civilization. The West and the Rest*, London 2011.

world.⁵ This Eurocentric and uncritical understanding of the historical development of »the West« has rightly been criticized and is in need of revision. Instead of freedom, recent studies point out that debts as well as informal dependency relations may have played a significant part in the way labour relations, political institutions and economic practices took shape.⁶ More importantly, in the overseas activities of the Dutch, forms of bondage and coercion played a recurring and crucial role that needs to be integrated in our understanding of the history of the Republic and its empire.

Slave trading, slave ownership and slave based production were endemic in both the Atlantic and Asian settlements under Dutch rule.⁷ The history of slavery in the Dutch Atlantic has gained increasing attention in the past few decades. Recently, renewed attempts to uncover the history of slavery in Dutch Asia slowly seem to gain momentum, but is still in a somewhat exploratory phase. Most attention has been paid to the rather limited activities in the transportation of slaves by the Dutch East India Company (VOC).⁸ Other studies have made progress in mapping general routes of slave trade, and its relation to urban centres, in establishing the numbers of slave populations in specific areas, and in studying specific characteristics of slavery and unfree relations in (specific regions of) Asia.⁹ Both histories of

- 5 See for example Jeff Fynn-Paul, *Empire, Monotheism and Slavery in the Greater Mediterranean Region From Antiquity to the Early Modern Era*, in: *Past and Present* 205 (2009) 1, pp. 3–40. This type of Eurocentrism has rightly been criticized, see for example Prabhu B. Mohapatra, *Eurocentrism, Forced Labour, and Global Migration. A Critical Assessment*, in: *International Review of Social History* 52 (2007), pp. 110–115.
- 6 David Graeber, *Debt. The First 5.000 Years*, New York 2011; Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History. Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation*, Chicago 2011.
- 7 See for a general introduction Postma, *The Dutch*; Pieter C. Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel. 1500–1850*, Amsterdam 2000; Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast. Roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie, 1750–1863*, Leiden 1993; Heijer, *Goud, Ivoor en Slaven*; Corrie Reinders Folmer-van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel. De Middelburgse Commerce Compagnie 1720–1755*, Leiden 2000; Rudolf Paesie, *Lorrendrayen op Africa. De illegale goederen- en slavenhandel op West-Afrika tijdens het achttiende-eeuwse handelsmonopolie van de West-Indische Compagnie, 1700–1734*, Amsterdam 2008; Han Jordaan, *Slavernij en vrijheid op Curaçao. De dynamiek van een achttiende-eeuwse Atlantisch handelsknooppunt*, Ph.D., Universiteit Leiden, 2012.
- 8 Marcus Vink, *The World's Oldest Trade. Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean*, in: *Journal of World History* 14 (2003) 2, pp. 131–177; Wil O. Dijk, *An End to the History of Silence? The Dutch Trade in Asian Slaves. Arakan and the Bay of Bengal, 1621–1665*, in: *IIAS Newsletter* 46 (2008), p. 16.
- 9 On Dutch slavery and slave trade in Asia Gerrit J. Knaap, *Slavery and the Dutch in Southeast Asia*, in: Gert Oostindie (Ed.), *Fifty Years Later*, Leiden 1995, pp. 193–206; Raben, *Cities and the Slave Trade*; Matthias van Rossum, *To Sell Them in Other Countries and to Make Their Profit. The Dynamics of Private Slave Trade and Ownership under the Dutch East India Company (VOC)*, in: Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Ed.), *Schiavitù e servaggio nell'economia europea secc. XI–XVIII/Serfdom and Slavery in the European Economy 11th–18th Centuries. Atti della XLV Settimana di Studi, 14–18 aprile 2013, Prato 2014*, pp. 593–617; Rik van Welie, *Slave Trading and Slavery in the Dutch Colonial Empire. A Global Comparison*, in: *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 82 (2008), pp. 1–2, 45–94; Bondan Kanumoyoso, *Beyond the City Wall. Society and Economic Development in the Ommelanden of Batavia 1684–1740*, Ph.D., Universiteit Leiden, 2011. Mapping slavery and slave trade: Allen Reid/Jennifer Brewster (Ed.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia*, St. Lucia 1983; Richard B. Allen, *Satisfying the »Want for Labouring People«. European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500–1850*, in: *Journal of World*

slavery, however, are mostly still discussed as part of the history of European expansion overseas. As a result, these histories often remain *overseas* histories that are presented as disconnected from metropolitan political, economic and cultural development.¹⁰ The crucial question of the *impact* of slavery on Dutch society has therefore been left unanswered.

This article will attempt to bring this question back to the centre of Dutch and international historiography. It will study the interconnections and impacts forged by the history of slavery. It will explore the economic, social and cultural impact on the Republic of slavery in the Dutch Empire. This will be done through a comparative analysis of the impact of slavery and slave trade in the Dutch Atlantic and Asian empire. The actual numbers of slaves brought to the Republic from both the West and East Indies were small. Other social, economic and cultural links between the Republic and its overseas slavery related activities were often stronger. Together these interconnections led to a distinct and significant impact on the Republic with a legacy that lasts to the present day.¹¹

In order to trace this impact, this article will first outline the global history of slavery and slave trade in the Dutch Empire from its inception in the 1580s until abolition in 1863. After this, it will study the impact of slavery on the Republic in interrelated domains. It will address the recent debates on the economic impact of overseas slave trade and slave related production. Second, it will deal with the impact of slaves physically travelling in and to the Republic through Dutch and international shipping. Combining the insight derived from these fields of research, it will be important to explore the ways the larger social and cultural impact of the overseas and interconnected history of slavery and slave trade on the Republic, which will shortly be dealt with in the concluding remarks.

History 21 (2010) 1, pp. 45–73; Gwyn Campbell, Slavery and the Trans-Indian Ocean World Slave Trade. A historical Outline, in: Himanshu Prabha Ray/Edward A. Alpers (Ed.), Cross Currents and Community Networks. The History of the Indian Ocean World, Oxford 2006, pp. 286–305; Remco Raben, Cities and the Slave Trade in Early-Modern Southeast Asia, in: Peter Boomgaard/Dick Kooiman/Henk Schulte Nordholt (Ed.), Linking Destinies. Trade, Towns and Kin in Asian History, Leiden 2008, pp. 119–140; Michael Mann, Sahibs, Sklaven und Soldaten. Geschichte des Menschenhandels rund um den Indischen Ozean, Darmstadt 2012. On specific characteristics Eric Jones, Wives, Slaves and Concubines. A History of the Female Underclass in Dutch Asia, Illinois 2010; Nigel Worden, Public Brawling, Masculinity and Honour, in: Nigel Worden (Ed.), Cape Town. Between East and West, Hilversum 2012, pp. 194–211; Susan Newton-King, Family, Friendship and Survival among Freed Slaves, in: Worden, Cape Town, pp. 153–175; Kate Ekama, Slavery in Dutch Colombo. A Social History, MA-thesis, Universiteit Leiden 2012; Gwyn Campbell/Suzanne Miers/Joseph Calder Miller, Women in Western Systems of Slavery, in: Slavery & Abolition. A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies 26 (2005) 2, pp. 161–179.

10 Recently the merits of New Imperial History were debated for the Dutch case. While the reception was rather critical, the idea to stress the unity of the imperial space, rather than the dichotomy between »homeland« and »colony« was taken up. Remco Raben, A New Dutch Imperial History? Perambulations in a Prospective Field, in: BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review 128 (2013), pp. 5–30.

11 Gert Oostindie, History Brought Home. Postcolonial Migrations and the Dutch Rediscovery of Slavery, in: Wim Klooster (Ed.), Migration, Trade, and Slavery in an Expanding World. Essays in Honor of Pieter Emmer, Leiden 2008, pp. 305–328.

A Europe Without Slavery?

The history of slavery has often been portrayed as an *overseas* history. Slavery, it has been emphasized, was a phenomenon outside Europe. The Dutch historian Piet Emmer continuously stressed the point that »for three centuries the ›civilized world‹ including the Netherlands has used double standards. ›Its own people‹ and other whites were never traded as slaves. Africans and Asians did sell their own race«. ¹² This rather bold statement leads Emmer to make two important claims that have a wider resonance throughout the historiography. First, he maintains that »Western Europe was a slave free enclave in a world full of slaves«. ¹³ Second, he claims »that the Netherlands has profited from slavery as consumers in an indirect way«, especially because »slavery as an institution has never existed in the Netherlands«. ¹⁴

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These points are problematic. Let us start with the idea of the absence of the *institution* of slavery in the Netherlands. There is a rather persistent but mistaken idea that enslaved Africans who arrived in the Dutch Republic were free once they arrived on the »free soil«. Enslavement persisted in the Republic into the nineteenth century until 1838 and the contention about the status of slaves in the Dutch Republic was only definitively resolved with the general abolition of Dutch slavery in the colonies on July 1, 1863. Until that moment slave owners, slaves and colonial and local Dutch government remained embroiled in disagreements over the status of enslaved people from the colonies who arrived in or visited the Netherlands. ¹⁵

In the last decades, during the period that abolition was debated in the Netherlands, the general trend became increasingly to require manumission for slaves who came to the Netherlands. Since 1830 limits were placed on the movement of enslaved household servants and sailors. Those owners who still found room to argue for the continuation of enslavement did so more or less on the same grounds as the debate on slavery and its abolition in general was waged. The most well known case in this regard is that around the Curacao-born enslaved woman Virginie who used her visit to the Netherlands to accompany the daughter of the owner several years prior to gain her freedom. Virginie's owner however argued that she was unfit to be free, an argument that mimicked the opposers of abolition, they generally tended to argue that while slavery might not be a good institution, it was better for the slaves who were not able to deal with freedom yet. ¹⁶

12 Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel*, pp. 13–14. Original: »De ›beschaafde wereld‹ inclusief Nederland heeft ruim drie eeuwen lang met twee maten gemeten. ›Eigen volk‹ en andere blanken werden nooit als slaaf verhandeld. Afrikanen en Aziaten verkochten wel hun eigen soort, maar dat zou voor Nederland nog geen reden geweest moeten zijn om deze vreemde normen te accepteren en er maar aan mee te doen.«

13 Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel*, p. 251. Original: »het feit dat West-Europa een slavenloze enclave was in een wereld vol slaven«. This idea has resonated in for example Fynn-Paul's concept of »slaving zones« and »non-slaving zones«, and the idea that Europe was the first »perfect no-slaving zone«. Fynn-Paul, *Empire*, p. 12.

14 Emmer, *De Nederlandse slavenhandel*, p. 21. Original: »Een monument ter nagedachtenis van de slavernij in Den Haag of Amsterdam herinnert aan een instituut, dat in Nederland zelf nooit heeft bestaan. Zo'n monument lijkt meer op zijn plaats in Suriname en op de Antillen, want daar heeft de slavernij ruim twee eeuwen het leven van een groot deel van de toenmalige bevolking beheerst. Nederland heeft slechts indirect van de slavernij geprofiteerd als consument.«

15 Oostindie/Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser*, p. 164.

16 Oostindie/Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser*, pp. 159–164.

Just as slavery as an institution was not absent in the Republic, actual slaves, although in small numbers, were not completely absent either. Both from the Atlantic and Asian empire, slaves were brought in on ships returning to the Republic. They stayed in households of Dutch merchant elites in Amsterdam and other important port cities as well as with well-to-do households more inland. Following the well-established British studies on the presence of ›black people‹ in Europe, various Dutch historians have pointed out the presence of free and enslaved ›black‹ persons from the West-Indian colonies.¹⁷ On slaves arriving from the Asian empire very little is known, except for some scattered references in studies on the Dutch East Indies and its employees.¹⁸

These scattered histories are important as they show that the history of slavery was not only an overseas history. The easy dichotomy between the ›freedom‹ in the Republic and the ›unfreedom‹ in the Dutch overseas colonies does not hold true. Not only were the developments *overseas* and *at home* related and deeply intertwined, even more so, the actual presence of slaves *in* the Republic problematizes the idea of the Republic as an environment in which slavery was absent, both physically and institutionally. The history of slavery and the history of the Dutch Republic are deeply entangled. As outlined in the introduction, this article aims to explore some of these links.

Slavery in the Dutch Empire

The Dutch Empire in the East and West Indies leaned heavily on slave trade and on the forced labour of slaves. By the latest calculations the Dutch forced more than 600.000 Africans across the Atlantic ocean.¹⁹ This is not the full number of slaves traded by the Dutch in the Atlantic world. The ›national‹ accounting of the slave trade has resulted in figures that include only those who were shipped under the flag of one particular nation, the slaves sold from the Dutch fortress of Elmina to the Brazilians or Portuguese are not included, although the profits of those sales did make their way back into the coffers of the Dutch West India Company. The Dutch settlements in the West-Indies counted some 70.000 to more than 100.000 slaves in the second half of the 18th century.²⁰ Amongst elites in the Dutch Atlantic sphere the practice of slavery was disseminated by way of gift-giving, migration and inher-

17 Dienne Hondius, Access to the Netherlands of Enslaved and Free Black Africans. Exploring Legal and Social Historical Practices in the Sixteenth–Nineteenth Centuries, in: *Slavery & Abolition. A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 32 (2011) 3, pp. 377–395. For example Kathleen Chater, *Untold Histories. Black People in England and Wales during the period of the British Slave Trade, 1660–1807*, Manchester 2009; Emma Christopher, *Slave ship sailors and their captive cargoes. 1730–1807*, Cambridge 2006.

18 Jaap R. Bruijn, Schippers van de VOC, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 158–160.

19 Karwan Fatah-Black/Matthias van Rossum, Beyond Profitability. The Dutch Transatlantic Slave Trade and Its Economic Impact, in: *Slavery & Abolition. A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 35 (2014), online publication pp. 1–21.

20 Stanley L. Engerman/Berry W. Higman, The Demographic Structure of the Caribbean Slave Societies in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, in: Franklin W. Knight (Ed.), *General History of the Caribbean*, vol. 3, London 1997, pp. 45–104, here pp. 48–55 estimate some 77.000 slaves for the year 1750, but most of their underlying data refers to years in the 1770s. The number of slaves in the West-Indies grew steadily during the second half of the 18th century. Hanneke Lommerse, Population Figures, in: Gert Oostindie (Ed.), *Dutch Colonialism, Migration and Cultural Heritage*, Leiden 2008, pp. 315–342; Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches. Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648–1795*, Leiden 1998.

itance. From Curaçao, the enterprising Dutch Governor Peter Stuyvesant introduced what would become a multigenerational practice of slaveholding into North American elite culture.²¹ In the second half of the 18th century, Suriname undoubtedly became the place with the most slaves in the Dutch realm. In its boom years almost 60,000 enslaved Africans worked on its sugar and coffee plantations.²²

Slavery and slave trade also flourished under the Dutch trading empire in Asia. During the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century, slave trade and slave labour was much larger in the Asian colonies than in the Dutch West-Indies. Around 1700, more than 26,000 slaves lived and worked in and around Batavia.²³ At this time, the slave population in Suriname counted around 8,500.²⁴ The overview of Markus Vink for the year 1688 is telling. He estimated some 66,000 slaves populated the cities and territories of the Dutch Asian empire. Besides Batavia, most privately owned slaves in the Dutch Asian empire were to be found at the Ambon and Banda islands, hosting some 10,500 and 3,700 private slaves. On Ceylon, European and Asian inhabitants of Company areas possessed some 4,000 slaves. Around this time, slaves were held in the Company territories in the Molluccas (400), Maccassar (1,500), Malabar (1,000) and at the Cape of Good Hope (1,000) as well. Compared to this privately owned slave population, the Company owned only a small population of slaves. Most were in Batavia (1,400) and at Ceylon (1,500). In other places, the Company kept smaller numbers of slaves, for example, at the Cape (382), the Malabar coast (32), Banda (166) and Ambon (76).²⁵

The VOC did not claim a monopoly in slave trade and apart from a few regulations the Company left the trade free for the participation of Company personnel and of other European, Eurasian and Asian merchants. Slave trade patterns were complex and crossed the entire Asian maritime world. African slaves were traded from Africa to the Middle East, India and other areas, slaves from Madagascar to the Cape of Good Hope and the Indonesian archipelago.²⁶ Indian slaves were traded to the Indonesian archipelago, but also to the Cape and other regions in the Indian Ocean region. In the Indonesian archipelago different forms of slave trade existed. Slaves were »generally drawn from the eastern and northern part of the Archipelago, where Islam had not yet a firm foothold and weak polities were prone to internecine warfare and slave raiding«. ²⁷ The destinations for slaves in Southeast Asia were often the major cities in this area. For Batavia, it has been estimated that several thousands of slaves were imported every year. For the 1770s and 1780s, this would have been a yearly number of some 4,000 slaves, mostly traded by European and Asian private traders.²⁸ Both illegal trade

21 Nicole Saffold Maskiel, *Elite Slave Networks in the Dutch Atlantic*, in: Jeroen Dewulf/Olf Praamstra/Michiel Kempen (Ed.), *Shifting the Compass Pluricontinental Connections in Dutch Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Newcastle 2013, pp. 186–205, here p. 189.

22 Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, p. 108.

23 Albertine H. Bollemeijer, *Database. Demography of Batavia, 1689–1789*, EASY DANS, <https://easy.dans.knaw.nl>, persistent identifier: urn:nbn:nl:ui:13-y0h-pdg (1989/2010). Probably excluding the Company owned slaves; Vink, *The World's Oldest Trade*, p. 166.

24 Lommerse, *Population Figures*, pp. 325–330.

25 Vink, *The World's Oldest Trade*, pp. 166–168.

26 Reid/Brewster, *Slavery; Bondage and Dependency*; Campbell, *Slavery*.

27 Remco Raben, *Cities and the Slave Trade in Early-Modern Southeast Asia*, in: Peter Boomgaard/Dick Kooiman/Henk Schulte Nordholt (Ed.), *Linking Destinies. Trade, Towns and Kin in Asian history*, Leiden 2008, pp. 119–140, here p. 132.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

as well as the private trade of Company personnel played an important part in the slave trade in and to the Dutch Asian empire.²⁹

Atlantic Slaves in the Dutch Republic

The Republic was not only connected to slavery and slave trade through financial, economic and social ties with its overseas empire. Slaves – and in that sense, slavery – actually made their way to the Republic. This history of slaves coming to and staying in the Netherlands is for the most part a hidden history, and only surfaces in the sources at four points. Firstly in the notarial deeds and inventories that state enslaved people as part of the *mobilia* of a household.³⁰ Secondly the enslaved servants appear in the passenger lists that colonial authorities kept of all the inward and outward movements of passengers. The movement of passengers was regulated and administered for several reasons, mainly to keep track of the colony's European inhabitants.³¹ Thirdly we find records of the enslaved in incidental court cases held about their status in the Republic.³² A fourth, although more elusive source, are the many paintings and drawings in which prominent Europeans let themselves be portrayed with black servants.³³ Together these sources give the impression of a small but often unproblematic presence of enslaved people and people of colour in Dutch towns. We use the material from these four broadly defined sets of sources to reconstruct the presence of slavery in the Dutch Republic.

Maybe not the first, but certainly the most iconic incident surrounding the presence of bondsmen from the Atlantic world in the Northern Low Countries has often been cited as an example of the uneasy approach by the Dutch to slavery. The story goes that in 1596 a privateer arrived with a shipment of slaves in Zeeland and that a debate ensued on whether these people could be sold or should be freed. The conclusion of this debate was set to have been that they were all freed. A recent re-evaluation of the case by Diennek Hondius, however, casts doubt over this story and the Dutch ambivalence about enslavement. The men and women were brought ashore in the Zeelandic town of Middelburg and the generally held idea has been that the enslaved were freed and that we do not know what became of them, the two options either being their transport to Antwerp or that they simply integrated into Middelburg's urban society. Hondius has argued convincingly that a third option is actual-

29 Van Rossum, *To Sell Them in Other Countries*; Gerrit Knaap/Heather Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders. Ships, Skippers and Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Makassar*, Leiden 2004, pp. 66–67; Heather Sutherland, *Slavery and the Slave Trade in South Sulawesi, 1660s–1800s*, in: Allen Reid/Jennifer Brewster (Ed.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia*, St. Lucia 1983, pp. 263–285.

30 Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, pp. 311, 336, 350.

31 John H. de Bye, *Database of Passengers To and From Suriname, Paramaribo 2003*. This brings together data from the Governor's diaries in Suriname in Nationaal Archief, Den Haag (in the following: NL-HaNA), *Sociëteit van Suriname, Gouverneursjournalen*, entry 1.05.03 and NL-HaNA, *Gouvernementssecretarie Suriname tot 1828*, entry 1.05.10.01 inv.no 1–25.

32 NL-HaNA, *Staten Generaal, 1.01.02., Processtukken van rechtbanken in West-Indië*, inventory numbers 9488–9628.

33 Vincent Boele/Esther Schreuder/Elmer Kolfin (Ed.), *Black is Beautiful. Rubens tot Dumas*, Amsterdam 2008.

ly more plausible, namely that the group was shipped by Pieter van der Haegen via Portugal to the West Indies where they were sold as slaves.³⁴

Local court rulings about the freeing of slaves were overturned by the *Hoge Raad*, the highest appeal court in the Republic. The court, for example, decided that slaves who had tried to escape from the colony to the Republic could be treated under the Roman laws for fugitive slaves since they had escaped from colonies where the *Order of Government* since 1629 had introduced Roman Law to account for slavery.³⁵ On occasion Dutch courts would rule against slavery in the Republic. In the case of Moses Netto this had clear anti-Semitic undertones. Netto had received a slave who he was wanting to bring to the Zeelandic colony of Essequibo on the coast of Guyana. The church council of Middelburg, the capital of Zeeland, found out that the girl had been baptized and argued that »when slaves were taken to Christian lands, they should not befall Jews, but they should be freed.«³⁶ This, however, stands in stark contrast to the famous family portrait made by Willem Cornelisz Duyster around 1633 of the family of the Zeelandic admiral Joost van Trappen Banckers. This family portrait, like many individual portraits from the same period, includes a black man wearing a minstrel outfit in the centre of the painting.

The practice of the Abrahamic patriarchal household that included slaves was introduced in Dutch towns in the later days of Habsburg rule.³⁷ Especially from Antwerp, families would arrive that would include one or more slaves in the extended household. This occurred on a small scale and was kept within the confines of the private house. These people would be kept in bondage and in all likelihood they were manumitted after a period of time as was stipulated in the Old Testament.³⁸ It did however also mean that their ownership could be transferred and they could be traded or given away. For example, in 1621 a *neger* who was part of an inheritance transferred owner, and other examples of such transactions can be found.³⁹ The most enduring memory of such a slave is that of »*bom servo*« (good servant) Elieser, who received on March 27, 1629 a prominent grave on the Jewish cemetery of Ouderkerk near Amsterdam by his master Paulo da Pina. That his name was Elieser is rather symbolic since it is also the name of the head servant of Abraham's household in the book of Genesis. Nowadays the Afro-Dutch and Jewish community jointly organize a yearly pilgrimage by boat to the grave of Elieser.⁴⁰ The data on household slavery in seventeenth century Amsterdam mainly stems from the records of the Jewish community in Amsterdam. Dienke Hondius sums up the finding of black and enslaved people in those records. Between 1629 and 1634 benefits were paid to »the mulata Sara d'Algarve, to Francisqua, Judich and Angelica, to the *mulat* of Espinoza and to a *Moreno*«. ⁴¹ The lack of manumission records is

34 Hondius, *Blacks in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 37–39.

35 Oostindie/Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser. Ordere van Regieringe Soo in Policie Als Justitie, Inde Plaetsen Veroverd Ende Te Veroveren in West-Indien*, October 13, 1629.

36 Oostindie/Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser*, p. 155.

37 Hondius, *Access to the Netherlands*, p. 380.

38 Exodus 21:2.

39 Oostindie/Maduro, *In het land van de overheerser*, p. 143.

40 Memorial for the abolition of slavery at the grave of the slave Elieser on the Jewish cemetery Beth Haim in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel. June 29, 2011 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpLFaX-UwVfc>) (accessed in September 2014).

41 Hondius, *Access to the Netherlands*; Lydia Hagoort, *Het Beth Haim in Ouderkerk Aan de Amstel. De Begraafplaats van de Portugese Joden in Amsterdam 1614–1945*, Hilversum 2005, p. 39.

noted by Lydia Hagoort with reference to the unofficial status of slavery, however, the lack of manumission could also point simply to the fact that no paperwork was required. In the Dutch colony of Suriname for example, manumissions only required official documentation from 1733 onwards, before that, manumissions are virtually untraceable.⁴² During the Dutch conquest of parts of present-day Brazil (1630–1654), the Dutch became actively involved in the trading of enslaved Africans and using them as labourers.⁴³ In this period we see people coming from Brazil to the Dutch Republic with their personnel. This was however only a trickle compared to the number of enslaved that arrived later when the Dutch found their »second Brazil« in Suriname from 1667.⁴⁴

Also in Suriname slaves were regarded as part of a household presided over by the man of the house. This becomes abundantly clear in the way the head tax was registered. This tax was the same for every head in the household and was due by the man of the house. Therefore we find the tax records stating the name of the man of the house followed by the number of whites, and both indigenous and black slaves that were part of that household.⁴⁵ In a formal sense there was no distinction between those who worked in the actual house and those who worked on the field of the plantation. In practice however there was. Surinamese planters often had several slaves, both men and women working in and around the house. In Paramaribo, the capital, the number of household slaves could grow to as many as twenty.⁴⁶ The planter families were used to these servants who often stayed with them their entire life. If children were born they were raised in close proximity to these bondsmen, and it was only natural for them to take these slaves with them to the Netherlands whether it was on business, to visit family or to receive an education. In the Netherlands itself the black servants had become a sign of distinction and one signifying exotic luxury.⁴⁷ The black servant was therefore also used as an exquisite gift to court business partners or friends. In one famous case, John Gabriel Stedman gave an enslaved boy, Quako, to the Countess of Roosendaal. Stedman had also tried to bring his enslaved concubine Joannah to Europe, although, as the story goes, she refused on the grounds that she thought her life in the Netherlands would be miserable.⁴⁸

Data on travels between the Republic and the colonies combined with data on plantation ownership and the offices held in the colonial bureaucracy paints a clear picture of who was actually bringing slaves to the Republic.⁴⁹ It is clear that bringing your black servant was a sign of accomplishment. For example, early in his career, during the 1760s Gabriel Paul Benelle sailed between Suriname and Amsterdam without his family and slaves. Benelle became a member of the Court for Civic Justice in Suriname in 1769, and on his next voyage to Amsterdam in 1773 he sailed out on board the *Sorg en Hoop* with not only his wife, but

42 Rosemary Brana-Shute, *Approaching Freedom. The Manumission of Slaves in Suriname, 1760–1828*, in: *Slavery & Abolition. A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 10 (1989) 3, pp. 40–63.

43 Charles Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil. 1624–1654*, Oxford 1957, pp. 136–140.

44 Postma, *The Dutch*, pp. 174–200.

45 NL-HaNA, Sociëteit van Suriname, Hoofdgeld en Akkergeld 1684, 1.05.03 inv.no. 213.

46 Ruud Beeldsnijder, »Om werk van jullie te hebben«. *Plantageslaven in Suriname, 1730–1750*, Utrecht 1994, pp. 148–149.

47 Boele/Schreuder/Kolfin, *Black is Beautiful*.

48 John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America, from the Year 1772 to 1777*, London 1796.

49 De Bye, *Database on Passengers to and from Suriname*.

also his slave Fortuna and Fortuna's child Avans.⁵⁰ Two years later Benelle returned with his wife, the slave and her child. A similar story would be that of the upstart Daniel Buttner who arrived in Suriname in 1747. He married the plantation-owning widow Maria Anna Overman-Papot. Together they managed a number of plantations and lived in the prestigious Heerenstraat of Paramaribo. When Daniel Buttner left the colony for the Dutch Republic to acquire credit for his plantations in 1768 he brought his slave Andries with him. Andries later accompanied Maria Anna Buttner-Papot on a later voyage, when she sailed to the Republic in 1771 »with her slaves Andries, Jantje, Rebecca, Bregitta en Dora«. ⁵¹ In these years the number of slaves who travelled to the Republic increased rapidly. In the period 1749–1781 a total of 569 slaves were transported from Suriname to the Dutch Republic and in that period a total of 544 returned. With regards to the ratio of male and female servants the case of Maria Anna Buttner-Papot is not representative, generally speaking more men than women travelled with their owners. The slaves were not simply concubines, but household bondsmen were generally more often male than female.⁵²

The afore mentioned Andries later laid claim to the fact that he had been in the Netherlands as a reason to be manumitted.⁵³ As can be seen from the numbers of slaves moving back and forth there was generally little confusion about the ›liberation‹ that would occur once a slave arrived in the Netherlands. For the mid-eighteenth century 95.6 per cent of the slaves were shipped back to the colony. Any confusion that did exist in the early 1770s around the case of Andries and several similar cases was quelled by the ordinance by the States General of May 23, 1776 on ›The freedom of Negro- and other slaves, brought here from the State's colonies to these lands«. This law states that ›it is an undeniable truth that the distinction between FREE and UNFREE people has been discontinued for centuries, and slavery has ended«. However ›this truth can not be deemed applicable to Negro- and other slaves brought here from the colonies«. The argument for this was that the freedom of the citizens of the state, who would lose their property, would be damaged more severely than that the upholding of the aforementioned principle of freedom would be worth. The preamble to the law reads: ›...the Owners of Slaves brought to the Netherlands would be deprived from Goods that are lawfully theirs. This would be a far graver affront against the birthright and immediate freedom of the inhabitants of this Republic, than that the application of such righteous ideas of Homeland Freedom would bring.«⁵⁴

50 Ibid. NL-HaNA, Hof van Politie en Criminele Justitie en voorgangers, in Suriname, 1669–1828. Naamregister van de regering van Suriname sedert 1684 Opgesteld 1743 en onvolledig bijgehouden tot 1816, 1.05.10.02 inv.nr. 235.

51 Ibid., Philip Dikland, ›De houtgrond Vierkinderen aan de Tawaycoere-kreek« (unpublished 2009). NL-HaNA, Database Index Gereformeerden (<http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/index/nt00342> accessed on 15 April 2014).

52 Oostindie/Maduro, In het land van de overheerser, p. 8.

53 Rapport op de missive van gouverneur en raaden van Suriname, concernerende de vryheid der slaaven die in het vaderland zyn geweest (19 July 1775).

54 Joannes van der Linden, Groot Placaatboek, deel 9, Amsterdam 1796, folio 526 Original: ›dewyl de Eigenaars van zoodanige Slaaven dan veelyds tegens hun wil en dank ontset zouden worden van hunne Goederen, die hun wettiglyk toebehoorden, het geen veel sterker tegens de aangeboore en dadelyke vryheid van de ingeseetenen deeser Republicq zoude aanlopen, dan dat de regte denkbeelden der Vaderlandsche Vryheid, door de applicatie van het hier voorgemelde principe op de voorsz. Slaaven nader bevestigd zouden worden«; Johannes van der Linden, Placaat omtrent de Vrijheid der Neger- en andere Slaaven, welke uit de Colonien van den Staat naar dese Landen overgebracht of overgesonden worden, May 23, 1776.

In the eight regulations of this law passed in 1776 the status of legally manumitted slaves was affirmed.⁵⁵ The emphasis was however on the rights of the owners. Those who had fled the colony to the Netherlands could be reclaimed by their owners. Those who had been brought or sent to the Netherlands as slaves remained legally the property of their owners if their stay lasted at most six months. If this six month period was exceeded, the owner could apply for an extension. A limit was placed on the movement of slaves who were part of a mortgaged plantation, since the creditors were to be protected. Here the right of the creditors trumped that of the indebted slave owners. The States General was clearly aware of the contradictory rulings by local courts in cases surrounding slaves and decided that earlier decisions could not be overturned by the present law. While the law was drawn up for »Negro- and other slaves«, it is clear that only slaves from the Dutch Atlantic were the objects of this law, which was to be circulated by the Westindia Company and the companies that managed the slave based plantation colonies Suriname and Berbice.

Arriving From Asia

The arrival of slaves from Asia has been covered in silence. This is, of course, related to the general public and academic silence on the »Asian« history of slavery under the VOC, but also to the lack of historical sources. For the Asian empire, the entrance to the Republic via Company homeward-bound ships was highly restricted. Asian and Eurasian subjects were not allowed to travel beyond the Cape of Good Hope without permission of the VOC.⁵⁶ Such permission was not easily granted. The VOC actively put up barriers to the migration of Eurasian or Asian subjects and wives and children of Company servants. Only unmarried Company personnel were allowed to return at the end of their service. Repatriation or leave to the Republic was only granted to married Company employees, who could prove that they could leave behind the necessary funds for their (Asian) wives to live in their absence. For free subjects, widows and children from the Indies there were other important restrictions.⁵⁷

From 1636 onwards, it was explicitly prohibited in Batavia for »natives to secretly board homeward vessels« and for »Europeans to take slaves on their (homeward) voyage« to the Dutch Republic.⁵⁸ The explicit ban on taking slaves to the Republic was renewed in 1644. In the following decade, the regulations were repeated almost yearly in the public ordinances (*plakaten*).⁵⁹ These restrictions seem to have been part of the general aim of the Company to control movements of European and especially Eurasian and Asian subjects between the Asian settlements and the Dutch Republic. Limiting the movement of passengers who were not in the service of the Company served as a means against uncontrolled migration and settlement, but also against unwanted circulations of knowledge about Company business and developments overseas. Despite this heavy regulation, slaves did make their way to the

55 See previous note.

56 See for example Hondius, *Access to the Netherlands*.

57 Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek* 1, pp. 306–307.

58 *Ibid.*, pp. 409–410. Original: »Verbod: 1e voor Europeanen tegen het medenemen naar Nederland van slaven; 2e voor inlanders tegen het heimelijk aan boord gaan van retourschepen.«

59 Among others Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek* 2, pp. 88, 109–110, 118, 129, 150.

Republic, although in smaller numbers than the slaves travelling to Europe via for example Dutch West-Indian or the Portuguese Asian connections.⁶⁰

The continuous repetition of the ban on transporting slaves is a sign that the regulation was actually quite ineffective. Scattered references in the ordinances indicate that this was indeed the case. The ordinance of 1636 was issued on the order of the highest Company authorities in the Republic, the Gentlemen Seventeen, indicating that they had been confronted with slaves arriving on Company ships in the Republic in the previous years.⁶¹ The ordinance mentioned that everyone who found a »free black or unfree« person »hiding on« homeward bound ships was obliged to report this or was to be punished with the annulment of three months of wages. This did not mean, however, that these slaves actually acted on their own. Sometimes, slaves may have tried to flee through homeward bound voyages, but often these slaves were put on board by their owners as servants or even administered as sailors – probably to make profit of their salaries in the Republic. Slaves who were found on returning vessels were not to become free, but were to be sentenced to remain a slave for the rest of their lives, presumably in the possession of the Company.⁶² These measures were not only meant to target the slaves, but also their owners, who illegally brought the slaves on board the homeward bound ships.

In 1644, the Council of India mentioned in a renewal of the ordinance that »on the order of the Gentlemen« »they could until now not allow the transport of slaves, or other black nations, to the fatherland«. Slaves were to be »confiscated without further judicial process«. ⁶³ In an ordinance in 1646, the *advocaat-fiskaal* (prosecutor) of the Court of Justice of India was reminded that the transport of slaves to the Republic was punishable by a fine of 50 *reales*.⁶⁴ In this *plakaat* it was declared that »slaves who turn themselves in [while being illegally transported] would be given their freedom«. ⁶⁵ In 1647, the fine on the transport of slaves had risen to 100 *reales*.⁶⁶ The Batavian ordinance of 1646 mentioned that the »superiors in the Republic were troubled by the requests of slaves to return to the Indies«. At the same time, the Company officials complained, the return of these slaves confronted the Company with »many costs«, such as the costs of housing and sending the slaves back to Asia. They repeated that it was important to »prevent this with effective means«. ⁶⁷ The authorities thought

60 Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, *Il commercio di schiavi nell'Europa sud-occidentale a metà del XVIII secolo. Uno sguardo sull'importazione di »Negri da India, Cacheo, Angola e Brasile« a Lisbona*, in: Cavaciocchi, *Schiavitù e servaggio/Serfdom and Slavery*, pp. 487–521.

61 Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek* 1, pp. 409–410.

62 *Ibid.* Original: »Alwie ontdekte, dat een »swarte,vrye ofte onvrye« zich aan boord van de bedoelde schepen »was versteekende«, moest daarvan kennis geven aan »onsen gecommiteerde« op straffe van verbeurdverklaring van drie maanden tractement. Indien de »swarte«, die zich verstopt had, een slaaf was, moest hij als straf »voor al syn leven« slaaf blijven«.

63 Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek* 2, p. 88. Original: »conform't intendit vande Heeren Majores« kon de Regering, tot noch toe niet verstaen om den overvoer van slaven ende slavinnen, als andere swarte natie, naer t'vaderlant t'admitteren.« And: »buyten rechtspleginge geconfisqueert«.

64 Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek* 2, pp. 109–110.

65 *Ibid.* Original: »Slaven, »haer selfs [als wederregtelijk vervoerd zullende worden] aengevende«, zouden »datelyck voor vry verclaert werden.«

66 Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek* 2, p. 118.

67 *Ibid.* Original: »Ook ondervonden »onse superioren aldaer« veel last door het »soliciteren« van slaven om naar Indië terug te keeren, terwijl hun overvoer »grootte onkosten voor de Comp.« na zich sleepte, »dat eenmael door blyckende effecten geprevenueert« behoorde te worden.«

the transport of slaves »to be harmful to the Republic«, especially with regards to the »procreation«, but the slaves were brought over despite their measures.⁶⁸ The fear of uncontrolled populations of Eurasian and Asian free and slave migrants mirrored the desire for control by the Company.

The history of arrivals of unfree persons from Asia, however, indicate the difficulty for the VOC to exercise complete control. At their return in the Republic in 1597, the crews of the first voyages to the East Indies by the Dutch *Voorcompagnieën* already took with them captured boys and slaves from Madagascar and Madura.⁶⁹ Around the 1640's it had become a custom that higher Company officials returning to the Republic brought with them their slaves from their overseas household for personal assistance. These slaves had to be sent back to Asia.⁷⁰ The high-ranking servants sending or bringing their slaves had to pay the Company for the costs of the transport and provisions of the voyage. For the homeward bound fleet of 1694, for example, the Company granted permission to the owners of the slaves Campon from Ambon (owned by Valentijn), Polvist from Tuticorin (Jacob Pauw), Victoria »from the Coast« (idem) and Frans Willemsz from Batavia (miss Brouwer). All the owners were mentioned to have »payed the transport and provisions [for the voyage] to patria«.⁷¹ From 1713 onwards, travel and provision costs had to be paid for both the voyage to the Republic as well as for the return voyage to Asia in order to »make it somewhat more difficult« to bring these slaves »that daily caused much trouble«.⁷² In 1734, the regulations for the transport of slaves on homeward bound voyages were sharpened, limiting the number of slaves that could be taken to four for every high employee.⁷³

At the same time, it seems that the regulations mainly applied to Company servants who were repatriated without performing active service on board the ship in which they made their voyage to the Republic. The permission for a fleet of eleven homeward bound ships from Batavia in the year 1702 is illustrative here. The owners of thirty-five slaves were licensed for their transport from Batavia to the Cape. Five slaves were licensed for transport from Batavia to the Republic. Rebecca from Batavia was the female slave of Josina Adriana Goodschalk, the daughter of the former merchant Pieter Goodschalk. The slaves Anthonij, Matijs and Cassandria were owned by the citizen Jurriaan Beek. The slave Maria was owned by the merchant Leijdak, but sent with the fleet »to serve his child«.⁷⁴

None of the licenses were for the captains, officers and other high-ranking employees of the returning ships. It seems likely, however, that at least captains, and perhaps other high-ranking crew members, did take some slaves, but that these were not registered. The historian Jaap R. Bruijn mentions that the permission for captains to take slaves presumably also applied to officers. These slaves, taken by captains and high officers on their ship, were not administered in the ships muster role and were apparently not noted in the license lists

68 Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek* 2, pp. 109–110. Original: »schadelijk voor de republycq in Nederlandt in 't reguard der voortteelinge.«

69 Jarig C. Mollema, *Op gegist bestek. De Nederlandse vlag op de wereldzeeën*, revised by A. H. J. Th. Koning, Amsterdam 1963, pp. 144, 161.

70 Bruijn, Schippers, p. 160.

71 NL-HaNA, Archief van de VOC, 1540, f. 363–364.

72 Bruijn, Schippers, p. 160. Original: »Van 1713 af moest voor hen bij vertrek uit de Oost reis- en kostgeld voor zowel de reis naar patria als terug naar Azië vooraf worden betaald«; »dagelijcx veel moeyte en overlast«; »wat difficielder«.

73 Bruijn, Schippers, p. 180.

74 NL-HaNA, VOC, 1651, f. 352.

as well.⁷⁵ Another important factor in the lack of knowledge on this specific slave transportation route is the lack of control on the embarkation of ships. In Batavia, Bengal, Galle and at the Cape, captains and officers of the returning vessels were in a powerful position to get their slaves on board without permission.⁷⁶

In 1762, this could even result in a scheme in which slaves were taken to the Republic administered as sailors. The authorities in the Republic complained that they had discovered that during that year slaves had been transported »not only without the payment of costs and provisions«, but that these slaves had »even been placed on the ships muster roles as sailors«. The slaves, »to the benefit of the ships authorities«, had »been paid the wages they had earned under false pretence«.⁷⁷

68

In the ordinance that was made public in response to this incident it was ruled »that, in order to prevent such illegal acts, no one was allowed to bring any slave to the fatherland, unless first, conform the orders of the Gentlemen, as proclaimed in the ordinance of April 1760, the transport and cost money for the voyage and return voyage has been paid in the Indies«. Furthermore, it was »approved and proclaimed that all repatriating captains, captain lieutenants and shippers, here by the water fiscal and in Bengal and Galle by the local fiscals, were ordered to watch out during the mustering for slaves, avoiding the mentioned transport costs, on the punishment of a fine of six months of wages«.⁷⁸ This may have affected the scheme, but it is uncertain whether this diminished the (illegal) transport of slaves on voyages from Asia to the Republic.

The slaves that were brought by captains and other highly ranked crew members were often men from various parts of Asia. On Asian routes, captains and officers were allowed to take some slaves on board. The Company did not allow these (private) slaves to be put to work on maritime tasks. The slaves mainly served for personal assistance and – especially – for the purpose of trade. They originated from various parts of the (Dutch) East Indies, such as India, Ceylon, the Indonesian archipelago, Madagascar and other parts of Africa. The slaves taken or sent on the homeward bound voyage to the Republic by other high officials of the Company – those who were not working on the returning vessels and had to apply for licenses – were often slaves previously employed in the owners household. These could be both female and male slaves, again from various parts of Asia. In 1700, for example, the

75 Buijn, Schippers, p. 160. See for example the lists with licenses in NL-HaNA, VOC, 1540, f. 363–364; 1628, f. 100–101, f. 157–158; 1640, f. 134–137; 1651, f. 352.

76 Buijn, Schippers, p. 160–174 also mentioned the lack of control on the loading of the ships. Indicative are also the many references to smuggling practices under the VOC.

77 Van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek* 7, p. 669. Original: »voor welke niet alleen geen betaling van kost- en transport-geld was gedaan, maar die zelfs op de monster-rollen van de schepen, waar op dezelve zyn geplaatst geweest, ten favore voornamentlyk van de scheeps overheeden, voor matroosen zyn aangetekent en als zodanig de voldoening hunner pretensylyk verdiende gagie gevordert hebben«.

78 *Ibid.* Original: »zo is, om tegens diergelyke ongequalificeerde behandelingen de nodige voorzieninge te doen en te beletten, dat aan niemand werde vergunt eenige lyfeygenen na 't vaderland meede te nemen, tenzy alvorens, conform de gevenereerde ordre der heeren Meesters, vervat by missive van den 20e April 1760, het transport- en kostgeld voor de heen en weder reyse in Indien zy betaalt, goedgevonden en verstaan alle repatrieerende capitains, captain lieutenants en schippers, alhier door den waterfiscaal en in Bengale en te Gale door de fiscaals dier plaatsen, by de monstering te laten gelasten, dat zy zig niet alleen zullen hebben te wagten om slaven, ter ontwyking van 't gezegde transportgeld, by de kladmonster-rollen steelswyse bekent te stellen als 's Comp' dienaren, op verbeurte van ses maanden gagie«.

widow Raap was accompanied on her voyage with the ship *Oostersteijn* from Batavia to the Republic by the slave Susanna van Ternaten.⁷⁹ The slave Philip »from the Coast«, owned by Miss Olasblom was sent under supervision of *baas* Maarten Danielsz Jaffer with the ship *Domburg*.⁸⁰

Taken together, the incidents and ordinances reveal a long history of arrival of slaves from Asia in the Dutch Republic. They must have been in small numbers. Presumably, the slaves were mostly sent back soon after their arrival. This history, however, is covered in almost complete silence. Traces of the transport and arrival of slaves were in ships' administrations, but this was not the case for all slaves. The silence in which the arrival of Asian slaves in the Republic is covered makes it difficult to uncover what happened to them in the Republic – whether they returned, stayed in the Republic, were sold or travelled further.

69

Economic Gains to the Republic

Slavery played an important economic role in the empire. The debate on the impact of (over-seas) slave trade and slavery related production on the economic development of the Republic is fragmented, but increasingly gains attention. For example, there has never been a combined calculation of the economic impact of slavery in Asia and the Atlantic on the Dutch economy in the early modern period. The calculations for the Dutch Atlantic are the most advanced, although also for the nineteenth century estimates have been made for the impact of Dutch colonialism in Asia.⁸¹ Even for the Atlantic system, however, the conclusions are far from definitive. For reasons of analytical clarity, the study of the economic impact of the Atlantic slave trade and its spin-off have often been separated from the study of the profits of slave based plantation production. Recently, the economic impact of the trans-Atlantic transportation of enslaved Africans by the Dutch has been calculated and debated.⁸² The more complex calculations on the impact of the Atlantic system as a whole are now taken up.⁸³

As we have argued elsewhere, the gross margin of the Dutch trans-Atlantic slave trade alone must have been between 63 and 79 million guilders in the period 1595–1829. This gross margin primarily found its way into the urban economies of slave trading ports in the Dutch Republic. A whole range of businesses survived or possibly even thrived because of the ex-

79 NL-HaNA, VOC, 1628, f. 100–101.

80 NL-HaNA, VOC, 1628, f. 150–155.

81 For the most recent critique of this literature, see Jan Breman, *Koloniaal profijt van onvrije arbeid. Het Preanger stelsel van gedwongen koffieteelt op Java*, Amsterdam 2010.

82 Fatah-Black/van Rossum, *Beyond Profitability*; Matthias van Rossum/Karwan Fatah-Black, *Wat is winst? De economische impact van de Nederlandse trans-Atlantische slavenhandel*, in: *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 9 (2012) 1, pp. 3–29; Piet Emmer, *Winst in de marge? Reactie op Van Rossum en Fatah-Black*, in: *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 9 (2012) 4, pp. 64–70; Matthias van Rossum/Karwan Fatah-Black, *Een marginale bijdrage? Van »winstgevendheid« naar de economische impact van de Nederlandse trans-Atlantische slavenhandel*, in: *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 9 (2012) 4, pp. 71–78; Càtia Antunes, Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, *Amsterdam merchants in the slave trade and African commerce, 1580s–1670s*, in: *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 9 (2012) 4, pp. 3–30.

83 Cf. the research project at the *International Institute of Social History, VU University and Leiden University* on »*Slaves, Commodities and Logistics: the Direct and Indirect, the Immediate and Long-Term Economic Impact of Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic Transatlantic Slave-Based Activities*«.

penses that accompanied the fitting out of a slave ship. Building or renting the ship, furnishing it with sufficient ropes, sails, armaments and irons was only the beginning. Insuring the voyage, paying advances on wages as well as salaries for the seamen who survived the triangular route significantly dented the gross margin. Provisioning was another major issue that could involve a large number of businesses, with bakers, butchers, coopers, distillers, gunpowder mills and dairy farmers all soliciting the slave trading companies. Such a hustle and bustle did not go unnoticed and harbour masters, commissioners, moneylenders and tax officers all took their share from the many transfers of goods and capital that were connected to the slaving voyage. Lest we forget, with such an abundance of people involved in the slave trade who were all taking a portion of the profitable imbalance between slave prices on the West African coast and the Americas, slave-trading companies also still managed to make modest profits for themselves.⁸⁴

The group of people whose labour, business, and family were connected to slavery spans far beyond the people involved in the slave trade. From the managing of plantations to the retail of plantation products, an extensive commodity chain stretched around the world, making the slave based nature of the system an issue of preponderance for many. Even sailors on trans-Atlantic freighters would have had the experience of working alongside slaves when rowing goods between the ship and the plantation.⁸⁵ From the early days of the Dutch involvement in the Atlantic system, soldiers were returning home with the experience of fighting alongside or against slave armies in Brazil, Suriname and elsewhere.⁸⁶ Significant expenses were made conquering and protecting the slave based system. The Dutch had wrested the slave forts out of the hands of the Portuguese, and although they lost their foothold in Brazil, they continued to control multiple Caribbean islands and flourishing plantation colonies in the Guianas, despite British and French assaults. Notwithstanding the great costs of these military operations, the profits made by influential individuals secured the continued involvement in the tropical and slave based Atlantic world. Profits are only the narrowest way of defining the impact of the slave based Atlantic system.⁸⁷ More research must point out the size and effects of the directly and indirectly involved with Atlantic slavery for Dutch towns, its economies and its people.

The research on the Dutch involvement on slavery and slave trade in Asia is lagging behind in this perspective. Almost no attention has been paid to the economic impact of slavery and the slave trade. The studies that actually have taken up these questions mainly

84 Henk den Heijer, *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, pp. 158–165; Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 276–277.

85 Karwan Fatah-Black, *Slaves and Sailors on Suriname's Rivers*, in: *Itinerario* 36 (2012) 3, pp. 61–82.

86 Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade. Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595–1674*, Leiden 2012, p. 126. See for example the chapters by Jean Jacques Vrij, *Wapenvolk in een wingewest. De slavenkolonie in Suriname, 1667–1799*, 45–74 and by Marjoleine Kars on *Wij beleven hier droevige tyden*. *Europeanen, indianen en Afrikanen in de Berbice slavenopstand, 1763–1764*, pp. 183–214; Victor Enthoven/Han Jordaan/Henk den Heijer (Ed.), *Geweld in de West. Een militaire geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Atlantische wereld, 1600–1800*, Leiden 2013.

87 Fatah-Black/van Rossum, *Beyond Profitability*. This perspective is also taken in the *»Slaves, Commodities and Logistics«* research project, cf. footnote 83.

focus on the impact on Asian regions.⁸⁸ One could argue, however, that there is more to this than has been studied so far. As we have seen, the Dutch East India Company was only partially involved in the slave trade, but was a sizable slave owner. The size of the slave population owned by the VOC varied around 4,000 to 7,000.⁸⁹ These slaves were employed for general transportation works within the VOC-settlements, but also for construction, agricultural and other work. This raises the interesting question on the economic costs and benefits of the employment of slave labour by the Company? Another important insight that has gained renewed interest is the widespread private slave ownership in Dutch territories throughout Asia – both in households and in factories, distilleries, fields, mines and other working environments.⁹⁰

The same is true for the involvement of many private traders in the slave trade, and especially the participation of Company personnel. Higher ranked Company officials would fit out private vessels for the participation in the slave trade.⁹¹ A well-known example is Jacob Bickes Bakker, a Company official who would send out his own vessel *De Hoop* with a Macassar citizen as captain to participate in the slave trade in the Indonesian archipelago.⁹² More widespread may have been the private trade conducted by captains, ships' officers and other high ranked crew members of ships engaged in the extensive intra-Asiatic shipping of the Dutch East India Company. Taking along a few private slaves on these intra-Asiatic voyages, it was possible to buy and sell slaves privately at the various destinations their work for the Company would take them.⁹³

The activities in the Asian slave trade by the Company and private actors, of course, took place overseas. The (economic) effects, however, were not limited to the overseas empires. It was possible, for Company personnel and citizens, to transfer money from Asia to the Republic through so-called *assignaties* issued by the Company as a guarantee that money deposited at an Asian Company office would be paid out in the Republic. Many Company employees used this route – as well as other, not always legal routes – to send home earnings that were often the result of their activities in private trade in Asia, amongst which was the active involvement in the slave trade.⁹⁴

88 For example Peter Boomgaard, Human Capital, Slavery and Low Rates of Economic and Population Growth in Indonesia, 1600–1910, in: *Slavery & Abolition. A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 24 (2003) 2, pp. 83–96.

89 Vink, *The World's Oldest Trade*; Jan Lucassen, A Multinational and its Labor Force. The Dutch East India Company, 1595–1795, in: *International Labor and Working-Class History* 66 (2004) 2, pp. 12–39, here p. 15.

90 Van Rossum, *To Sell Them in Other Countries*; Kanumoyoso, *Beyond the City Wall*; Knaap/Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*; Sutherland, *Slavery and the Slave Trade*.

91 Knaap/Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*, pp. 66–67; Sutherland, *Slavery and the Slave Trade*; van Rossum, *To Sell Them in Other Countries*, pp. 575–592.

92 Knaap/Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*, p. 67.

93 Van Rossum, *To Sell Them in Other Countries*.

94 On *assignaties* Albert van der Belt, *Het VOC-bedrijf op Ceylon*, Zutphen 2008, pp. 167–220; Gastra, *Geschiedenis van de VOC*, p. 139. For the argument Van Rossum, *To Sell Them in Other Countries*.

Conclusion

The Dutch Republic was not a slave free enclave where slavery did not exist. On the contrary, slavery was very much alive in the Dutch Republic both as an institution and as a common practice. Slavery was not only present through its representation in paintings, through literature, the news or public and political discourse. Slavery existed as an actual institution. Although in small numbers, slaves were brought to the Republic from both the West and East Indies. Arriving in the Netherlands, these slaves did not gain their freedom, but remained slaves. This physical presence made the institution of slavery into something more than an abstract or overseas phenomenon. This is crucial, as the enslaved with their presence in the metropolis embodied the important links between the histories of slavery and slave trade, often overseas, and the history *in* and *of* the Dutch Republic. The holding of slaves was *en vogue* amongst exactly those elites directing the Dutch Republic and Dutch Empire through its political, cultural and economic institutions.

The overseas history of slavery and slave trade fed back into the Dutch Republic on various levels. The widespread trade in slaves by trading companies (mainly in the West, on smaller scale in the East) and by smaller private merchants or even individual employees (especially in the East) created economic gains that returned to the Dutch Republic through different channels. At the same time, many of the Dutch and other Northwest European merchants, captains, ships' officers, sailors, soldiers and others, were confronted with the actual experience of slave labour relations, slave trade and even slave possession. In large numbers, they returned to the Republic, took home these experiences or transmitted them via letters, stories or travel accounts.

Travel accounts narrating the experience of Europeans with life in the colonies and slavery in Dutch domains circulated widely in the Republic and in Europe.⁹⁵ Several German soldiers reported extensively on slavery in the East- and West-Indies in their published (and unpublished) *Reisebeschreibungen*.⁹⁶ Also in light fiction references to the experience with slave holding were included. An interesting, less well known example is the *Middelburgse Avonturier*, which mentions in passing the wretched faith of the black overseers on plantations by noting how they betrayed ›their nation‹ (fellow Africans) and how they assisted the slaveholder in inventing the most gruesome torture.⁹⁷ Direct experiences were also transmitted through letters. The VOC-servant C. S. Palm, working in Tagal, wrote his sister Leetje in Delft in 1794 about his increasing aversion against his Asian surroundings. He complained: »I don't know, I have gained an aversion against these black dogs. I sell my slaves daily and will only keep two or three Moors with my English servant, who has been with me for the last three years.«⁹⁸

95 Karwan Fatah-Black, *Suriname and the Atlantic World, 1650–1800*, Ph.D., Universiteit Leiden 2013, footnote 58.

96 See for example the various volumes of the source publication of German travel accounts edited by Samuel P. L'Honoré Naber, *Reisebeschreibungen von Deutschen Beamten und Kriegsluten im Dienst der Niederländischen West- und Ost-Indischen Kompagnien 1602–1797*, Den Haag 1930–1933.

97 *De Middelburgsche avonturier, of Het leven van een burger persoon: bevattende zyne zeldzame opvoeding, kinderlyke minnaryen, leeroeffeningen, rampspoedige koophandel [...] doormengt met vele zeldzame geschiedenissen, wonderlyke minnaryen, en verbazende ontmoetingen*, Amsterdam 1760, pp. 187–188.

98 Letter of C. S. Palm, 14 November 1794, The National Archives, High Court of Admiralty, 32, 550. It must be stated that this example of everyday transmission of experiences is actually pre-

In these ways, slavery overseas, just as the smaller numbers of slaves arriving in the Republic, had a strong impact on intercultural relations and on European perceptions of the world. Considering these links and the presence of slavery in the Republic, it is striking how little Europeans seemed to have questioned the presence of slaves in their midst. Slavery was an integral part of the Dutch and European world view, as well as the social fabric of European societies. The image of Europe and the Dutch Republic as beacons of freedom and slave-free enclaves does not fit with the lived experience of slavery and (more or less) unfree labour relations on the continent itself and in its colonial outposts overseas.

The preoccupation with the origins of »freedom« and a persistent understanding of market economies as essentially »free« has clouded our perspective of the past. It is time to engage with new explorations on the role of unfree relations, not only in the form of slavery, but in other variations as well. Studying the role of slavery in the Dutch global empire and the presence of slavery in the Dutch Republic is only a modest first step. It is important to critically re-examine the role of coercion in other parts of the history *of* and explicitly *in* Europe as well. How did debts, legal and economic force, or other limits to freedom influence migration, labour relations, social strategies, everyday life and politics? What was the impact of these forms of coercion on economic, social and cultural level? And how did the mechanisms on these different levels interact? As much of the global history of slavery, these questions are waiting to be explored.

served because it did not reach its destination: it was on board a Dutch East Indiamen taken by a British privateer. Original: »ik weet niet, ik heb een teegensin aan die swarte honde gekreegen. Mij slaave verkoop ik daaglijks en zal maar twee a drie mooren houden met mijn Engelse kneegt die al 3 jaaren bij mij is.«