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## Rotterdam and transatlantic slavery

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# III

ALEX VAN STIPRIAAN

# ROTTERDAM AND TRANSATLANTIC SLAVERY<sup>1</sup>

At the end of 1676, a ship set sail from the coast of what is now Benin, probably setting off from the West India Company trading post in Offra.<sup>2</sup> Painted on the stern in looping letters was the word ‘Rotterdam’, for that was the home port of this particular West India Company ship and its point of departure nearly a year earlier.<sup>3</sup> Four hundred and fifty people were lying and standing in the hold. Most of them had been brought from the kingdom of Alada<sup>4</sup> and its tribute payer Ouidah,<sup>5</sup> both of which in turn paid tribute to the powerful kingdom of Oyo in what is now Nigeria. The people held below deck would have been unaware of these political relationships. However, they would probably have been impressed by the towns with populations of twenty to thirty thousand that they passed through along the coastal area known to the crew of the *Rotterdam* as the Slave Coast. The people themselves came from more northerly regions, a few perhaps even as far north as what are now Niger and Burkina Faso. They had to travel huge distances on foot to reach the ship. They came from different cultures and spoke a variety of languages.<sup>6</sup> Some could understand one another a little or even quite well, others not at all. The cultural and language differences must have made it a confusing and lonely experience. They had almost nothing they could

hold onto that was familiar to them, except perhaps other people from their own region.

In the course of the journey across the sea, they learned to communicate with one another and even to a small extent with the people who controlled the ship, with their weird clothes and strange skin colour. For example, the Africans adopted '*sippi*' as their version of *schip*, the Dutch word for ship, an object for which they had no word in their own languages. Later, *sippi* became a term of address for everybody who had been through the communal experience of that traumatic journey and survived. It was a form of kinship.<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that on average one in every seven people who were forced to make that voyage across the ocean never reached the final destination. The figure for this journey by the *Rotterdam* was actually as high as one in six.

They would have had no idea the captain of the ship was called Harmen Claesz de Vos, and they would probably not have been interested in this fact anyway. Any more than he would have been interested in who they were. They did not even know the ship had a name. And yet that name, or rather that sound, 'Rotterdam', would be heard repeatedly in their lives, and the lives of their fellow enslaved and their descendants. There were various plantations and about a dozen slave ships that bore some variant of that name (the *Erasmus van Rotterdam*, *Moorshoofd van Rotterdam*), there was a fort of that name on the island of Sint Eustatius, and the main town in the new plantation region of Nickerie in Suriname was christened *Nieuw Rotterdam*. What is more, over the course of time dozens of men were given the slave name 'Rotterdam'. As was common practice, that name would often have been bastardized into something else (Lottam?) in everyday use or replaced by a nickname, but the slave owner would at any rate have known the man by the name Rotterdam. And over time, tens of thousands of enslaved Africans would have had contact with people from Rotterdam working as soldiers or on ships from Rotterdam, or in their capacity as slave owners or overseers. At any rate, for two and a half centuries the fate of many tens of thousands of Africans was determined in Rotterdam.

Conversely, these Africans, or Afro-Americans, also played a role in determining the fate and economic situation of those people in Rotterdam. Not only were their bodies both the merchandise and the production factors that Rotterdam residents intended to use to make a profit, but those same Rotterdam residents soon discovered that the enslaved could also



3.1 and 3.2 *Left: a man sits and makes a drawing in an idyllic landscape in the vicinity of the Berg en Dal plantation while a boy, probably enslaved, has to keep him in the shade (possibly for hours on end?) (Huygens, c. 1850, Rijksmuseum); right: the reality for the enslaved for whom violence was always a risk (print taken from Stedman 1791/1988).*



resist these functions that were forced upon them and consequently put the supposedly easy profits at risk. There was a huge chasm between the lived experiences of these two groups and their opposing perspectives on ostensibly the same world. What for many Europeans was a tropical idyll was a site of daily violence for the enslaved.

Research into Rotterdam's history of Atlantic slavery<sup>8</sup> shows very clearly that the port town was involved in the system of slavery from the start right up until the end. That system continued to have repercussions in Rotterdam even after it ended, down to this very day. This chapter discusses Rotterdam's — changing — involvement in slavery. The other side of the story is also explored, namely how the enslaved responded to Rotterdam's slavery activities. Finally, the chapter considers those people who fought against the system, which was eventually abolished in 1863, over two and a half centuries after the start. But as was said, this episode in history is not closed and the effects can still be felt.

## FIRST SLAVERY CONNECTIONS

The first involvement of Rotterdam men in the trafficking of humans from Africa to the Americas and the trade of goods produced by slave labour was probably the activities of the shipowners Johan van der Veeken and Pieter van der Haghen at the end of the 1590s. They sent ships to Brazil, either directly or via West Africa, which then returned to Rotterdam with sugar from the Portuguese plantations. It was not long before there were Rotterdam men dispersed across the Caribbean, trading with merchants in Rotterdam itself and with enslaved people working for them on their plantations and ships. The level of activity increased dramatically after the West India Company was founded (1621), the Dutch captured part of Brazil (1624) and the British Fellowship of Merchant Adventurers set up a branch in Rotterdam (1635), following which the town became the leading port for the import of American tobacco into the Netherlands. The arrival of the Merchant Adventurers led to the settlement of large numbers of British merchants over time, giving Rotterdam the epithet 'Little London'.<sup>9</sup> Some of them were closely involved in business related to slavery. In the nineteenth century, on the other hand, this group was overrepresented among Rotterdam's abolitionists.

Rotterdam's tobacco industry certainly flourished thanks to the British connection. It appears that at least thirty-five ships sailed to Virginia from Rotterdam between 1643 and 1649, often via Britain. Later, Maryland and then South Carolina were added as destinations. By the mid-eighteenth century, four to five ships packed with tobacco were sailing each year from South Carolina alone to Rotterdam, often via London and Glasgow. It is estimated that around 3,500 workers were employed on a daily basis at that time at about fifty workshops in Rotterdam processing the tobacco. Some said this was the main industry in the town in that period.<sup>10</sup>

All that tobacco was produced by slave labour. That labour was always inextricably linked with violence, regardless of the location in the Caribbean or Americas. To give an example, Simon Overzee from Rotterdam built up a position as the owner of a tobacco plantation in Maryland<sup>11</sup> from the late 1640s. His colleagues knew him as a sociable man but his subordinates, let alone the enslaved Africans who worked for him, saw another side to the man. This cruel behaviour only left traces in the historical records when it resulted in legal proceedings, although it must have been more common in practice. In 1655, Overzee bought a man who was given the name Antonio. He had been transported from the Congo and

Angola coast along with 413 other African men, women and children on board the Dutch ship the *Witte Paard*. On arrival at Overzee's plantation, Antonio refused to work. Twice he tried to escape but he was caught on both occasions. For a while, he was held in chains for "misbehaviour". When released from the chains, Antonio remained lying on the ground and refused to get up. Overzee became angry, cut some branches from a nearby pear tree and started to beat Antonio. Then he poured hot fat all over Antonio's mutilated back and had him tied to a ladder with his arms stretched up above him. He left Antonio hanging in this position until the man suffocated. Some time later, Overzee had to appear before the court to answer for his actions following witness accounts from two of his servants. However, the jury dismissed the charge because Overzee had not done anything that was forbidden by law.<sup>12</sup>

## ORGANIZATION

The first 130 years of Rotterdam's involvement in trans-Atlantic slavery was marked by the interaction between private parties, local government and the monopoly trade of the West India Company. The West India Company was of little importance in the period from 1730, when it lost its monopoly over the trans-Atlantic trade, until its dissolution in 1792. During that period and up until the formal abolition of slavery in 1863, the initiative lay with private businessmen from Rotterdam and elsewhere. The national government provided the legal and administrative framework, in particular after 1792. The businessmen as a class overlapped to a large extent with Rotterdam's regent class — the men from wealthy families who held civic office and were to be found in all the civic government bodies.

Then there were the thousands and thousands of 'ordinary' Rotterdam folk who benefited in one way or another from the system of slavery. They might be soldiers, sailors or government officials in the colonies, dockworkers in Rotterdam or employees in one of the many companies producing supplies for the traffic in humans, the plantations or the colonial economy in general, or in the processing industries. It should be noted that the extent of Rotterdam's involvement varied a great deal between the various colonies. For example, none of the 240 soldiers serving the West India Company on Curacao in around 1775 came from Rotterdam because the Company's Amsterdam Chamber had exclusive rights to the island.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the West India Company fort of Elmina in

what is now Ghana was staffed largely by soldiers and sailors employed by the Maas (Rotterdam) Chamber at the start of the eighteenth century. Thus it transpired in 1730 that 169 of these employees were owed back payments from the Maas Chamber.<sup>14</sup>

## THE MAAS CHAMBER OF THE WEST INDIA COMPANY

When the West India Company was founded in 1621, following the example of the East India Company, control was divided over five chambers. One of them was the Maas Chamber, which in turn consisted of three subchambers: Rotterdam, Dordrecht and Delft. After almost half a century, it was concluded that combining the three would be more efficient and in 1669 Rotterdam became the headquarters for the Maas Chamber. This Chamber operated in a complex world of intricate contracts, national monopolies, illegal enterprises and partnerships with foreign businessmen. Yet it was also quite a manageable scene with groups of entrepreneurs who knew one another well in a town that grew from around 20,000 inhabitants in 1622 to nearly 60,000 in 1809. Those businesspeople belonged to the group of over 2,600 people (6 per cent) who earned more than 600 guilders per annum in 1750; some belonged to the select group of about 250 Rotterdam residents with a yearly income of over 4,000 guilders.<sup>15</sup> This elite group of businessmen included dozens who were involved in activities related to slavery. These men who organized all the trade and production related to slavery did not themselves generally stray much beyond the boundaries of Holland and Zeeland provinces. Only 'ordinary' Rotterdam residents and a small group of administrators and colonists crossed the ocean and saw slavery with their own eyes.

It should be noted that by no means all slavery-related activities involved the West India Company. There were for example Dutch people who had settled in other countries but still organized their trade via Rotterdam, and Rotterdam businessmen who took part in the slavery-related operations of other countries. There were also foreigners involved who conducted slavery activities in part via Rotterdam but without involving the West India Company. Conversely, not all West India Company activities concerned slavery. For example, just over half the ships that were sent to Africa by the Maas Chamber in the period 1674-1740 were sent on 'direct return journeys', that is to say, they returned directly to Rotterdam after they had been loaded with gold, ivory, gum, pepper and other products on the coast of West Africa. The other ships, comprising just under



half those sent from Rotterdam to Africa by the West India Company, filled their holds with people who were sold as slaves in the Americas.<sup>16</sup> About 25,000 people in total were transported between 1621 and 1740.<sup>17</sup> There were also direct return journeys to the Caribbean. On the outward journey, the ships transported all the goods required to keep the slave-based colonial economy running, and they returned with commodities produced by slave labour. The West India Company also carried out privateering, the best-known example being the capture of the Spanish treasure fleet off the coast of Cuba by the Rotterdam vice-admiral Piet Heyn (or Hein).<sup>18</sup> All that silver had in turn been mined by the Spanish using the slave labour of Africans and Native American peoples.

**Table 1: Voyages by West India Company ships of the Maas Chamber, 1623–1740**

Ships	Slave trade	DIRECT RETURN ROUTE			Privateering	Intra-Caribbean
		Brazil	Africa	Caribbean		
197*	50 (25%)	59 (30%)	55 (28%)	17 (7%)	13 (7%)	3 (2%)

\*excl. three cruisers

Source: Van Stipriaan, *Rotterdam in slavernij*, 99.

The West India Company, which at one point went bankrupt and was relaunched, was not a hugely profitable venture for its investors. The directors, who were also the major shareholders, made somewhere between 200 and 500 guilders a year on average.<sup>19</sup> That was a respectable annual wage for a dockworker but for a man in the regent class it was peanuts. For them, the benefit lay in the status and the insider information that they acquired through their directorship, which was a huge asset in their other business ventures. This is nicely illustrated by the case of the De Meys, a Rotterdam regent family.

Jean (Jan) de Mey Sr was originally from Rouen in France. In the early seventeenth century he and his brother Jacques (Jacob) moved to Rotterdam, where he set up a sugar refinery. He later added a second. On his death, the two brothers were jointly worth 58,000 guilders. At that point, he also owned three houses and a warehouse and he had shares totalling 14,000 guilders in the West India Company. His son Jan Jr also lived in style, purchasing the manorial domain of Oost-IJsselmonde, which came



with a castle and cost him the then formidable sum of 55,000 guilders. The sugar refineries remained in the hands of the family until the mid-eighteenth century. Furthermore, through the wife of his great-grandson Jacob Jan, the family also acquired the sugar plantation of Groot Marseille in Suriname, on which over 150 enslaved people lived and worked. Both Jan Sr and Jan Jr were directors of the Maas Chamber of the West India Company, the latter for more than half a century. One brother-in-law of Jan Sr was a director of the Amsterdam Chamber while his other brother-in-law had two sons-in-law with sugar plantations in Brazil.<sup>20</sup>

Until the mid-seventeenth century, Brazil was the leading supplier for the Dutch market of raw sugar, produced by slave labour. Jan Sr's brother Jacob de Mey moved to Brazil at one point. His two sons remained behind in Rotterdam, where they each owned a sugar refinery. Another son was born to Jacob in Brazil. This young man later sailed back and forth between the Netherlands and the short-lived Dutch colony in Brazil to make sure of a constant supply of sugar to Rotterdam. When the Netherlands lost the colony to Portugal again in 1654, he moved with his family to Curacao, where several generations of his descendants continued to work for the West India Company. His son Pieter gave his name to the Willemstad district of Pietermaai (Pieter de Mey), which is now a popular nightlife centre in the Curacao capital.

In short, the West India Company directorships of the De Meys were just one aspect of their wider family interests in the sugar industry. Similarly, there was always a De Mey or relative of the family in the Rotterdam town council throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the family regularly provided burgomasters for the town. The information the family obtained through these various positions must have been invaluable. The material benefits lay in the commodities produced with slave labour and the associated processing industry in Rotterdam. Thus the annual proceeds from the Groot Marseille plantation for the De Mey owners ranged from 6,750 guilders to over 30,000 guilders between 1770 and 1830.<sup>21</sup> This was a period when the average annual salary for a school headmaster in the Netherlands was about 650 guilders.<sup>22</sup>

## NON-WEST INDIA COMPANY SLAVERY ACTIVITIES

As was noted above, from the 1640s increasing numbers of English merchants settled in Rotterdam. Their activities included business related to slavery. They arranged for the supply of tobacco from North America,

often via England or Scotland, and they supplied British slavers with merchandise that could be used to purchase human cargo in Africa. They did this to circumvent the monopoly of the Royal Africa Company, the British equivalent of the Dutch West India Company. The profits were enticing as these 'Guinea goods' (as they were termed),<sup>23</sup> which came from all over Europe, were much cheaper in Rotterdam than in England. These businessmen were of course competitors from the perspective of the Dutch West India Company as well, which deemed them to be interlopers, but they tried to dodge both countries' monopolists by loading goods in both Rotterdam and England. In 1722/1723 alone, fifteen such 'interloper' ships sailed from Rotterdam via the Isle of Wight to West and Central Africa to trade in slaves. For example, the *Argyle* sailed with a cargo worth around 2,854 pounds sterling to West Africa; of that cargo, 2,070 pounds worth of goods were delivered by the British-Rotterdam firm Senserf & Zoon.<sup>24</sup> The ship was dispatched by Thomas Hull, based in England, who organized numerous slave journeys with this ship, all via Cabinda (in modern-day Angola) and with the same English captain.<sup>25</sup> It is not known whether Senserf provided merchandise for Hull's other journeys but that was certainly the case for the *Princess Amelia*, the *Mermaid* and the *Judith*, amongst others.<sup>26</sup>

There are sufficient indications to suggest that Rotterdam probably had such links with French dealers too. As most of the sugar from the Dutch colonies was shipped to Amsterdam, there was demand among the sugar refineries in Rotterdam for alternative sources. Additional supplies came to Rotterdam from the Caribbean via French ports with slavery connections such as Nantes and Rouen. Equally, French slave ships also stocked up with barter goods from Rotterdam to exchange as part of the trade in humans in Africa. For example, a certain Jean Cossart from Rouen had settled in Rotterdam with his brother Pierre in 1693 and had married a Huguenot woman.<sup>27</sup> It is known at any rate that in 1714-1715 he arranged the cargoes for two French slavers that were fitted out in Rotterdam for a triangular trade trip, the *Heureux Retour* (Happy Return) and the *Saint Jean d'Afrique* (Saint John of Africa). Both ships had set sail from Le Havre and both engaged in the trade in humans along the coast of Angola.<sup>28</sup> The two ships left Africa with a total of 983 enslaved African men, women and children and headed for Saint-Domingue (now Haiti); sixty-eight of the enslaved never made it there alive.<sup>29</sup> There is no documentary evidence of Cossart conducting any other slavery-related

business but given his network, this is unlikely to have been his only such venture. His son Jacob (1713-1780) became a member of Rotterdam town council, was burgomaster several times and was appointed a director of the Rotterdam Chamber of the East India Company in 1775.<sup>30</sup>

A third slave business that was not related to the West India Company was the Brandenburg African Company (BAC). This enterprise, which was established in 1682, was officially Prussian but most of the capital and the ships came from Rotterdam. Three Rotterdam families — Pedy, Schepers and Van Belle — held a majority of the shares. In shareholder meetings, Josua van Belle was the most important man with seven of the fifty-two votes.<sup>31</sup> After negotiating with the local rulers, the BAC built four forts along a fifty-kilometre stretch of the Gold Coast (Ghana). The largest and most important fort was Great Fredericksburg. A trading post was also built on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas, which the Prussian ruler had leased from Denmark.<sup>32</sup> This gave the company its own triangular Atlantic route, with Rotterdam and, to a lesser extent, the Dutch province of Zeeland as the driving force. In the course of fifteen years, the BAC carried out at least eighteen slave voyages in which over 8,200 Africans were forcibly transported across the ocean; 15 per cent died *en route*.<sup>33</sup>

Van Belle was a well-known figure in Rotterdam. He had made his fortune as a slave trader based in Cadiz, Spain, working for the Spanish crown and the West India Company via Curacao. From the 1680s, he continued these activities from Rotterdam while his brother Pieter (Pedro) ran the business in Cadiz. Later Pieter travelled as an agent to the Caribbean islands of St. Thomas and Curacao, where he authorized his brother to deliver enslaved Africans to Jamaica via the firm of John Grill in London. In Rotterdam, Josua married the daughter of a burgomaster and was himself elected burgomaster on several occasions. He had a home with a coach house on Korte Hoogstraat in Rotterdam, acquired six manorial domains with the capital he had accrued and built up an art collection numbering around 250 paintings, including works by Bruegel, Titian, Rubens, Vermeer and Rembrandt.<sup>34</sup> Almost half that collection was sold by his son Josua Jr to fund the construction of an extravagant double townhouse on the waterside street of Leuvehaven.<sup>35</sup> In other words, the Van Belles did business throughout the Atlantic world, working with the West India Company at times but also without it if that was more convenient.

## MERCHANTS AND FINANCIERS

The West India Company did not play a role of any significance in Rotterdam's Atlantic activities from the 1730s and 1740s onwards. This period heralded the emergence of new private trading firms owned by regents who often also held posts in the civic government. Most of these firms chartered ships and acted as financial brokers and bankers as well. These activities took two forms. The first was the 'part share' system in which a trading firm fitted out a ship but arranged for other investors to share in the costs, and consequently also in the eventual proceeds. This enabled large investments to be made while spreading the risk. The plantation *negotiaties* (the second form) were based on a similar principle. A merchant-financier would start up a *negotiatie* fund in which others could invest, purchasing bonds at a fixed interest rate. The merchant-financier then loaned that capital to plantation owners in Suriname and the Caribbean at a higher interest rate, with the plantation itself as collateral. The loans were a kind of mortgage, except that there was also an obligation to purchase all the plantation materials and sell the plantation products via this merchant, and in some cases even to use his ships for transportation and his services for insurance. The fund director could charge a commission on all transactions; everything went through him. There were numerous such firms; most were based in Amsterdam, but Rotterdam had some major players too. Their heyday was in the second half of the eighteenth century but some continued to operate until deep in the nineteenth century; one firm was only set up in the early nineteenth century.

The four most important firms in this area and the driving force for the slavery-related activities in Rotterdam after the decline of the West India Company were Coopstad & Rochussen (C&R), Ferrand Whaley Hudig & Zoon (FWH), De Weduwe A. Hamilton & Meyners (H&M) and Colin Campbell, Dent & Co. (CCD). All but CCD were involved in the plantation *negotiaties* business, mainly in Suriname. C&R and H&M also took part in the trade in humans. In addition to these four firms, there was a much larger group of merchants and brokers who, while not involved so directly in slavery, still supplied products for the slave ships and the 'direct return journeys', invested in slavers or in *negotiaties* and/or processed or traded the commodities produced by the slave colonies. By the mid-eighteenth century, Rotterdam had about twenty coffee traders and thirty sugar refineries. In around 1780, there were seventy-five trading firms, merchants and shipowners in Rotterdam involved in the trade with

and navigation to Suriname and/or the Dutch Caribbean islands.<sup>36</sup> It is likely that none of these men ever actually set foot in any of the slave colonies, but the crews on the ships they did business with certainly did.

An example of a family that was only indirectly involved in the system of slavery was the Baelde family, who were originally from Flanders. They started as traders in salt and sugar, then branched out into a wide variety of products in the seventeenth century. For instance, they acted as brokers between buyers and sellers of grain, wool, houses and also slavery-related products such as sugar and coffee. Moreover, they did business with ship-owners, both legally via the East India and West India Companies and illegally with interlopers. For example, Pieter Baelde invested in a share of a slave-trading voyage by the *Vier Gebroeders*; this ship, which operated without the authority of the West India Company, took 363 enslaved people from what is now southeast Nigeria (Calabar) to Sint Eustatius. Only 311 of them survived the journey; one in seven Africans on the ship died during the crossing. Pieter Baelde also supplied goods to ships for exchange in the purchase of people on the African coast. For example, in 1701 he loaded brandy and copper armbands worth 4,100 guilders onto the *Peerl*. As brokers, the Baeldes inevitably did business with all the leading trading firms, including that of Josua van Belle. Their enormous network was maintained and monitored through a web of marriages and family connections. They were related to the De Meys, the family mentioned earlier, and to Gregorius Mees, the founder of the bank Mees & Zn, which, after undergoing various transformations, eventually became part of the Netherlands' largest bank, ABN AMRO, at the end of the twentieth century.

Two brothers from the third generation of the Baeldes jointly invested over 100,000 guilders in *negotiaties* organized by Hudig. They also invested in ships through the 'part share' system. It was hardly surprising they had these business interests: after Michiel Baelde became a widower, he married a sister of Herman van Coopstad of C&R; she in turn was the widow of John Hudig, the father of Ferrand Whaley Hudig. Her daughter was married to Isaac Rochussen, the other partner in C&R. Baelde lived in the family home on Geldersekaade and also had an impressive country house called Zomerhof ('Summer garden') built on Schiekade overlooking the Schie canal. It was here that Rochussen and Esther Hudig got to know one another and they probably celebrated their wedding here in 1749. As was common practice at such celebrations, a laudatory poem was

recited. It made no attempt to hide the nature of his activities: “Rochussen, whose work from dawn to dusk, whose industriousness and impeccable conduct, makes wild Africa and savage America crawl with his busy slave trade.” Despite the fact that Rochussen was ultimately declared bankrupt, he was still easily able to lend his brother-in-law Ferrand Whaley Hudig 18,000 guilders shortly before his death. When his widow Esther died in 1822, her estate was worth more than 152,000 guilders.

Isaac Jacobus Rochussen entered into a partnership with Herman van Coopstad in around 1747, at which point he was already trading in enslaved humans. Van Coopstad was involved (and continued to be involved) in the trade with the eastern Mediterranean, known as the Levant trade. Their joint firm eventually grew to become the largest private slave-trading organization in the Netherlands.<sup>37</sup> In a thirty-year period, at least sixty-five voyages were made by slavers, transporting nearly 23,000 Africans by force across the Atlantic Ocean.

Based on the figures for twenty slave voyages, C&R must have purchased barter goods worth nearly three million guilders in Rotterdam and the rest of the Netherlands to exchange in return for enslaved people in Africa. Guns and gunpowder accounted for a quarter of the total; they were used in Africa to wage new wars and take people prisoner who could then be sold as slaves to the Europeans. It is not possible to say how profitable the trade in humans was for C&R as the sources do not give enough information about the costs. It is clear at any rate that the revenues involved were huge from a comparison of the purchases and sales of the enslaved for ten slave journeys between 1761 and 1775. A total of 3,303 African men, women and children were purchased for 418,290 guilders and the 2,803 Africans who survived the journey were ultimately sold for the sum of 1,011,908 guilders. The gross earnings from these ten voyages before deducting the costs were therefore 593,618 guilders, or nearly 212 guilders per enslaved person.

In addition to the trade in humans, C&R also operated direct return trips, mainly to Suriname, taking supplies to the plantations and returning with plantation products for sale. Finally, they arranged financing for the plantations using the above-mentioned *negotiatie* funds. That was a new system that was first used in 1753 by the Amsterdam merchant Willem Gideon Deutz and was copied almost immediately by C&R in 1754. The firm asked the Rotterdam town council for support, and got it. The civic government gave C&R a loan of 30,000 guilders at 4 per cent interest as

a suretyship and granted permission to mention its involvement in the prospectus. At least one plantation owner in Suriname was in debt to the fund the following year, to the tune of 70,000 guilders. It is not known what happened afterwards with the fund but it must have been reasonably successful because in 1766 C&R set up a *negotiatie* fund of 670,000 guilders with ten Surinamese plantations as collateral. This was followed two years later by the '14 tonnen Gouds' fund (for nearly 1.4 million guilders), which invested in twenty plantations in Suriname. These were enormous sums for the time.

One of the weak points in the *negotiatie* system was a tendency to speculate with the appraisal values of the plantations in Suriname, while many owners no longer lived there (or never had). As a result, an increasing number of plantations were managed by administrators who were paid a commission on the production. Because in the final analysis it was the (frequently disappointing) production that determined the actual value of the plantations rather than the (ever higher) appraisal values, the plantation owners were often unable to fulfil the loan repayments and sometimes could not even pay the interest.<sup>38</sup> In that case, the *negotiatie* holder had to dip into his own pocket to pay the bondholders and/or take possession of the plantation for the amount of the debt. This development was what led to the bankruptcy of C&R in 1779. By that point, Van Coopstad had been dead for several years and other merchants had taken over the management of the funds. More than a century later, in 1897, an announcement was placed in the local city newspaper *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* calling on bondholders of the '14 tonnen Gouds' fund to cash in their bonds. They would not have been worth much by then. But it had been a different matter when the fund was set up: expectations were high then.

That would have been why Rochussen's brother-in-law Ferrand Whaley Hudig started up a slavery-related firm about ten years after Rochussen, but focusing exclusively on *negotiaties*. Ferrand Whaley Hudig, who was the grandson of an English merchant who had settled in Rotterdam in 1705, was particularly well-equipped for this type of business. Not only could he draw on the experience of his uncle and brother-in-law (C&R), he also had access to the capital of Michiel Baelde, who became his step-father when he was twelve and who supported him throughout his career. Moreover, he was able to make a flying start because in that same year he inherited nearly 53,000 guilders from the estates of his father and grandmother.



Between 1759 and 1775, Ferrand Whaley Hudig concluded *negotiatie* contracts for the sum of over 1.2 million guilders with mortgages on thirteen plantations in Suriname as the collateral. In that period, these plantations had around 1,400 enslaved Africans working on them, whose fate was thus partly in the hands of Hudig in Rotterdam. Their circumstances remained unchanged if the plantation was profitable and could meet the interest and loan repayment obligations, and if the supply of materials — and new workers from Africa — went smoothly. If that was not the case, the enslaved people on the plantation had to work even harder, with a decreasing workforce, to make sure the debts did not rise further still.

That was all far removed from the world of the *negotiatie* bondholders. Their only concern was the return on their investment, which was initially promoted as solid and suitable “for widows and orphans as well”. Indeed, a third of the 217 bondholders were women, half of them widows. About half of the investors had just one or two bonds. That made them relatively small-time investors, although only 10 to 20 per cent of Rotterdam’s population would have been in a position to purchase a bond at all. A total of ninety-one investors (42 per cent) had bought between three and ten bonds of 1,000 guilders each. Only seventeen people (8 per cent) had invested more than 10,000 guilders in Hudig’s *negotiaties*. This select group included two Rotterdam brothers Johan and Samuel Hoppesteijn (43,000 guilders), brokers who collaborated intensively with Michiel Baelde. Another of these major investors was Dionisius Paauw from Utrecht (30,000 guilders) who had made his fortune on the other side of the world, in the service of the East India Company on Java. He had worked there as a merchant, an alderman of Batavia (now Jakarta) and supervisor for the returning fleet.<sup>39</sup> The most important investors were Hudig’s stepfather and uncle Baelde, who held 102 of Hudig’s *negotiatie* bonds. This group of seventeen major investors contributed over a quarter of the total capital.

That family connections played a key role in investments is also clear from the list of 217 bondholders. Thirty-six surnames appear multiple times, ranging from two to eight people. For instance, the five members of the Van Bulderen family plus two relatives by marriage named De Lille had jointly invested 32,000 guilders and the three Knijn brothers 15,000 guilders. These families, excluding the Baeldes, contributed one third of the capital in *negotiaties*.

Hudig was on good terms with other investors in his *negotiaties* as well. He dined regularly with the sugar refinery owner Abraham Erbervelt and

his wife and daughter, who lived on Hoogstraat.<sup>40</sup> These two men also paid visits together to Leiden, The Hague, Amsterdam and other places. Erbevvelt had invested the far from negligible amount of 11,000 guilders in six of Hudig's plantation *negotiatie* funds, while his daughter also had 6,000 guilders in bonds invested in another two plantations.<sup>41</sup> But Hudig was friendly as well with smaller-scale investors in his ventures. He wrote in his diary, for example, that he had visited the fair in The Hague with Mr Top and his wife, a couple who had 'merely' 4,000 guilders worth of bonds. He would undoubtedly often have been accompanied by such acquaintances on his Sunday walks to leisure spots such as the Oranjeboom inn on the River Rotte.<sup>42</sup> Hudig owned two pleasure boats and he lived in a house overlooking the water on the corner of Geldersekaade and Wijnhaven streets, which he had purchased for 15,000 guilders. The house remained the family home for the next century, with his son and grandsons living there. The premises were demolished in 1897 and the Witte Huis ('white house') was built there in its stead, a symbol of modernity and one of the few buildings in this part of the city to have survived the bombing at the start of the Second World War. After Ferrand Whaley's death in 1797, his widow was able to enjoy a life free of financial worries thanks to the widow's portion of 10,000 guilders and the lifelong annual payment of a quarter of the amount in the commission account of the firm Ferrand Whaley and Jan Hudig, with a minimum of 800 guilders.<sup>43</sup>

It became clear towards the end of the eighteenth century that the return on the investments in Surinamese *negotiatie* funds was much less than the bondholders had hoped. Rather than the borrowers paying back the principal or even the interest on the loans, their debts were mounting. The overvaluation of the capital goods without taking account of the production capacity, even though it was the production revenue that was used to repay the loans and pay the interest, led to severe losses that were exacerbated by a stock market crisis in Amsterdam, failed harvests in Suriname and the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. As a result, the plantation owners stopped fulfilling their financial obligations and the collateral, namely the plantations, were taken over by Hudig. Now he faced the challenge of extracting enough income from the plantations to keep the bondholders satisfied. Few repayments were made of the principal, while the interest rate was reduced from 5 per cent to 3 per cent, and even then it sometimes took years before the pay-out was made. But investors who held their bonds for long enough did eventually see some kind of return on

their investment. For example, about a dozen bonds held in Somerszorg plantation were repaid with interest in the early years. Between 1769 and 1778, Hudig paid an average of 10,840 guilders per annum to the fifty-six bondholders in this *negotiatie* fund,<sup>44</sup> after which annual interest was paid at least until 1801. However, the payment for 1801 was only made in 1823. In other words, there were substantial arrears and investors needed to exercise patience. It is not clear whether any payments were made after that year.

Hudig continued with the business even though he regularly had to pay the interest and other advances out of his own pocket, which meant that the borrowers were in debt to him personally quite apart from the mortgage debt. His son Jan Hudig, who officially took over the firm five weeks before the death of his father, continued to run the business under the new name Ferrand Whaley & Jan Hudig until his death in 1853. While it might have generated much less income than they probably expected, the fact that they persevered with the business for so long is an indication that they were still able to earn money from slavery. As key players, they charged a commission on all their transactions. Thus they received 2.5 per cent of the gross proceeds from the sale of the plantation products in Rotterdam, a brokerage fee of 1 per cent of the insured value for arranging the insurance of cargo transported to and from Suriname, warehouse rents, commission on the goods purchased for the plantation and an annual fee of 1 per cent of the debt — to mention just the most important items. Hudig was also involved in the shipping industry through the ‘part share’ investment system. For example, the firm earned a total of 6,499 guilders on its share of one sixteenth in the costs and revenue from direct-return voyages by the *Willem Suzanna* and *Elizabeth* in 1774 and 1775.<sup>45</sup> In the nineteenth century, Jan Hudig had shares in a large number of ships that sailed to Suriname, Curacao, Demerara<sup>46</sup> and St. Thomas in the Caribbean, as well as ships sailing to Batavia on Java in Southeast Asia. Jan even considered issuing a new *negotiatie* fund in 1820 for a Surinamese cotton plantation. That plan probably did not go ahead but it does show that Hudig still saw the plantations in Suriname as an interesting investment.

Jan Hudig played a leading role in public life in Rotterdam, perhaps even more so than his father. He was a member of the municipal council (1811–1813), a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (1824–1851) and one of the founders in 1806 and a supervisory director of the insurance firm *Rotterdamsche Assurantie Compagnie*.

nie. Moreover, he acted as an agent for the shipping insurance business of Lloyd's in Rotterdam for nearly four decades. He retired in 1851 and died three years later. He kept true to his family's English heritage as he was a lifelong member of the English Presbyterian Church in Rotterdam, even acting as an elder for a period. From the 1840s, there were increasing calls within this Rotterdam church for the abolition of slavery in the Netherlands. His views on the subject are unknown.

Jan Hudig also collaborated with the firm of Colin Campbell, a Scot who had settled in Rotterdam before 1802. In the 1820s, his firm Colin Campbell, Dent & Co. had a big stake in Suriname as it had concluded at least half a million guilders' worth of *negotiatie* contracts with (primarily British) plantation owners in the new plantation regions of Coronie and Nickerie. Nickerie adjoined British-owned Guyana. Hudig and Campbell collaborated on direct-return voyages to Suriname and later also to Java; the ships for these trips were built in the shipyard belonging to another Campbell relative in Delfshaven (then a municipality just outside Rotterdam).

The Weduwe Archibald Hamilton & Meyners (H&M) trading firm also continued with its plantation activities in Suriname until deep into the nineteenth century. However, its activities reached a peak in the second half of the eighteenth century, when it had arranged *negotiatie* mortgage contracts of half a million or more guilders in at least nineteen Surinamese plantations. Rotterdam's civic government had itself invested directly in some of these plantations for a sum totalling 84,000 guilders. H&M was also involved in the shipping 'part share' system: at least thirteen slave voyages were undertaken under its responsibility between 1753 and 1770, whereby almost 4,000 Africans were taken by force to Suriname, Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) and Curacao. On average one in five or six of the people crammed into the hold died during the crossing. H&M focused primarily on Suriname. That was evident from the laudatory poem marking the silver wedding of Johan Gerard Meyners and Elizabeth Hamilton, which included the following line: "As Suriname's harvest blesses you with its fruits".<sup>47</sup>

This raises two questions. What did these residents of Rotterdam know about the slavery system, given that (with rare exceptions)<sup>48</sup> they themselves had never visited any of the slave colonies? Even more importantly, how did the people who had been enslaved to make money for these Rotterdam residents deal with the system?

It is not difficult to answer the first question. All the documents belonging to the merchants and key investors that the modern-day historian can read were also read by those businessmen then. These merchants and financiers were well-informed about the plantation operations. The reports they received not only covered the financial figures, the production and the state of the buildings but also the condition of the enslaved workers, who were the most important ‘capital goods’. Furthermore, the reports and accounts sent by the plantation director, and especially the reports and letters from his superior, the administrator — also termed the ‘correspondent’ — provided information on the principal developments in the colony. The Rotterdam merchants also spoke with the captains of ships transporting goods on their behalf and with ship’s passengers who had just arrived in Rotterdam. A good example is the letter that F.W. Hudig received from his administrator Jean Rocheteau on the death of Jan Yzak de Haan in Suriname in 1778. He was the owner of the Somerszorg and Duuringen plantations, which had *negotiatie* loans arranged by Hudig. Rocheteau wrote:

“I have to tell you that you should not have any regrets regarding the death of that man as the regime he operated on the two plantations in the final year of his life with respect to the slaves did not merit that confidence. I only discovered these extreme abuses at a late stage, too late to curb them for reasons of humanity and in the interests of the mortgage lenders”.<sup>49</sup>

This text is very telling. First, Rocheteau clears himself of all possible blame. He limits De Haan’s inhuman treatment to the final year of his life; moreover, he himself learned of the abuses at such a late stage that he was unable to intervene. Given that in the final three years of De Haan’s regime at Somerszorg (1775-1778), the number of enslaved people declined from ninety-six<sup>50</sup> to sixty-five (an average decrease of 11 per cent per annum!),<sup>51</sup> this alone should have been enough to alert Rocheteau to serious problems on the plantation. Furthermore, he mentions that it was desirable to intervene for reasons of humanity, but he puts just as much emphasis on the interests of the mortgage lenders, in other words the fact that De Haan’s regime would adversely affect profitability for Hudig and the bondholders. That was what really mattered. It is not known what Hudig wrote in response but it seems likely that he too would have

been more concerned about the profitability than the fate of the enslaved workers. This is quite clear from the correspondence concerning Roosenburg, another plantation for which Hudig had arranged a *negotiatie* fund. When two young men were killed in an accident, the plantation owner wrote that he was distressed by the incident, as “they were still young [and] what is more, slave prices are very high at the moment”.<sup>52</sup> Previously, an administrator had written to Hudig about the major smallpox epidemic raging in Suriname in 1790, which had cost the colony two million guilders’ worth of slaves.<sup>53</sup> What concerned him was the capital depletion, not the loss of human lives.

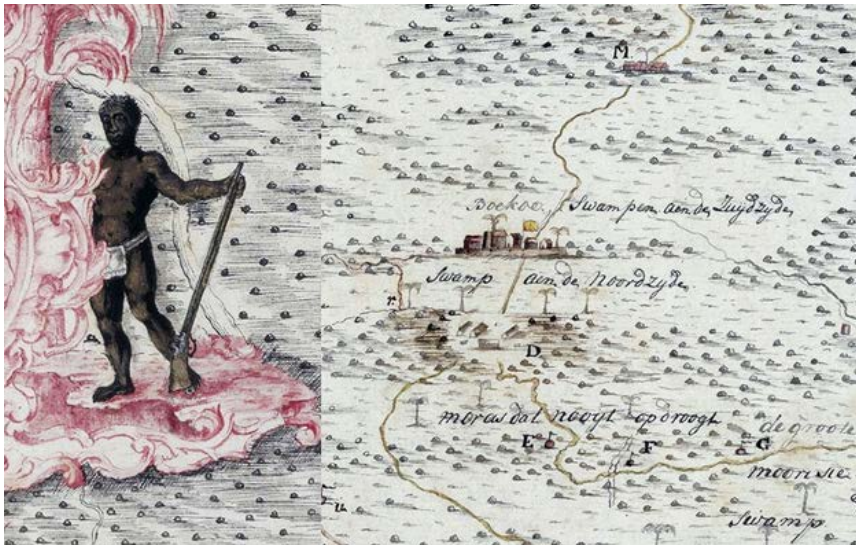
Regardless, Hudig was made aware of how bad conditions could be on ‘his’ plantations, not just from correspondence of this nature but also simply by keeping an eye on the regular financial reports. Like today’s historians, he would have carefully perused the annual accounts for the plantations. In this way, Ferrand Whaley or his son Jan would have learned about the harsh punishments endured by the enslaved workers at Somerszorg (which the workers themselves called *Dibaan*) and all the other plantations under Hudig’s responsibility. Their lives bore no comparison with the living conditions, tough though they were, of workers and agricultural labourers in the Netherlands at that time. Of the thirty-six adults and twelve children still living at Somerszorg/*Dibaan* in 1827;<sup>54</sup> over a four-year period, fifteen adults were sent to the town to be punished at the fort. The men were often subjected to the cruel ‘Spanish buck’ punishment.<sup>55</sup> These sanctions had to be paid for so they appeared in the accounts, and consequently must have been seen by the Hudigs. Did they ever wonder what had given rise to these punishments? The reports and accounts for the 1850s provided an answer as from that time on the plantations were required to record what corporal punishments had been administered to the enslaved workers and for what reason. Thus the documents for the same plantation Somerszorg/*Dibaan* record that in a nine-month period in 1852 the director gave old Elias twenty-five lashes of the whip “for dereliction of duty”, he gave three women and a man fifteen lashes each for “poor coffee picking”, administered fifteen lashes to “several” men and women without any further reason being recorded, and gave the boy Eclips “a paternal correction”, whatever that may have been, but it was certainly more than simply a verbal admonishment.<sup>56</sup>

The plantation accounts listed each slave with their name and age, and recorded who had been born, who the mother was, who had died, who



was sick and with what disease, what work had been carried out, what food they had been given, how they were housed and so forth. The Hudigs must have been able to form an impression of what life was like on ‘their’ plantations, as could probably the ‘supervisors’ for the various *negotiatie* funds appointed by the bondholders and who were also able to inspect the books. However, they did not comment — in writing at any rate — on the fate of the enslaved Africans.

The other question is what the enslaved people knew about Rotterdam and what slavery meant to them. They probably had no inkling of the existence of the Hudigs or other merchants and financiers in Rotterdam or elsewhere, let alone the bondholders. Their knowledge of Europeans was largely restricted to the Europeans in the colony, from the plantation owners and their agents such as Rocheteau to the soldiers and sailors. But the policy pursued by people like Hudig did affect their own lives, of course. If a plantation’s debts mounted, that meant there was less money available to invest in the enslaved workforce. So no new Africans were purchased and the current workers had to labour harder than ever to produce as much as possible. Economies were also introduced in the purchase of various goods. As a result, the enslaved plantation workers were



3.3 Two details from the map by J.F. de Frederici from 1773: on the left a maroon standing guard and on the right the maroon village Boekoe, surrounded by swamps and with the military camp below it (National Archives Collection).



less likely to receive handouts of salted fish, textiles or tobacco. Thus the enslaved would have experienced the effects of the financial situation of 'their' plantation first-hand.

## MARRONAGE

As mentioned above, plantations generally had two names. One was the name given by the owner, but this had no significance for the enslaved, who spoke their own Creole language rather than Dutch.<sup>57</sup> They used their own name for the plantations, often a reference to the first or most notorious owner. The De Mey family's plantation Groot Marseille, mentioned earlier, was called *Jakobi* by the enslaved after the first owner Jacoby. That made much more sense to them.

In 1736, Groot Marseille/*Jakobi* was attacked by maroons. These were Africans who had escaped from slavery and lived in communities in the forests and marshland of the interior, far from the plantations. It all began when a group of maroons was seen behind the plantation. When chasing after these maroons, a camp with seven homes and vegetable plots was found and destroyed. Some weeks later, the maroons returned and attacked the plantation (Jacoby himself was not there at the time).<sup>58</sup> Perhaps they wanted to take revenge for the destruction of their livelihood or to show that they would not be crushed. However, the attack was repelled by the enslaved residents of the plantation. Only a few joined the maroons, taking a number of guns with them.<sup>59</sup> More than a generation later, in 1774, exactly the same happened when the renowned maroon leader Boni attacked the plantation but was driven off by the plantation staff with the help of the enslaved workforce. Boni forcibly took two men, four women and six children. The rest stayed on *Jakobi*. What is more, two of the women returned voluntarily some time later with their three children and Sultan, one of the two men, with a homemade raft. It seems they preferred a harsh life in slavery to the insecurity of life as a free but hunted maroon. Incidentally, things did not turn out well for Sultan as some time later he fell out with the *basya* (the foreman among the enslaved), possibly for reasons connected with the attack, and the feud got so out of hand that he killed the man and then committed suicide.<sup>60</sup> Kokora, the other man taken (in chains) by Boni, did not meet a happy end either. He was killed by Boni and his associates for fear he would escape and betray them.<sup>61</sup>

It may seem strange that the enslaved workers did not join the maroons when they had an opportunity to do so, and that they even defended their

oppressors, but their behaviour can be explained. When the neighbouring plantation of La Paix/*Lapè* was attacked by maroons associated with Boni, everyone who was able to do so escaped and joined the maroons in the forest. However, unlike Groot Marseille/*Jakobi*, La Paix/*Lapè* was encumbered with a large mortgage debt; as a result the enslaved had to work even harder, while there was less and less food available for them.<sup>62</sup> The De Mey family on the other hand, who owned Groot Marseille, earned enough from the plantation to extend production and to systematically increase the size of the slave workforce and the plots they used to grow their food. As a result, the people on this plantation were not faced with an ever greater workload, while their food situation was actually improving.<sup>63</sup> That made it much more difficult for them to choose a life as a maroon, with the associated uncertainty and spartan existence. The choice was easier for the enslaved workers on La Paix, as is clear from the words of a number of them after they became maroons: they explained that the plantation owner had always made them work until late in the evening, but they too were human beings and that was why they were no longer able to bear life on La Paix.<sup>64</sup> Many of the Boni maroons were originally from La Paix. They formed the basis of a clan or kinship group (*lò*), which still exists today and is called *Lapè lò*. To summarize, there was a thin dividing line between a decision to flee and a decision to stay, with the specific living conditions playing a key role.

Despite the differences with La Paix, the people on *Jakobi* also had a strong relationship with the maroons. Not long after 1740, an African man named Askaan was purchased for Groot Marseille/*Jakobi*, but he seems to have escaped into the forest several years later. In 1765, he joined Boni and became the new leader of a large group of maroons. However, he was probably too old to take part in the battles which made Boni famous.<sup>65</sup> Aluku, the maroon name adopted by Askaan from *Jakobi*, eventually became the name used by all the 'Boni maroons'.<sup>66</sup> This suggests Aluku enjoyed real prestige in that community. Suku, the leader of the Tesisi maroons who later joined forces with Boni, had also escaped from *Jakobi*, apparently in about 1750 when he was still a child.<sup>67</sup> And they were not the only ones. When a group of maroons attacked the neighbouring plantation of Nieuw Java in 1758, some of them called out that they were originally from *Jakobi*. Incidentally, the fact that men such as Aluku and Suku took on a different name as maroons shows how little they identified with their slave names.<sup>68</sup>

The escapes clearly continued as the Groot Marseille/*Jakobi* slave list for 1770, for example, notes “ran away” and “in the forest” for the men July and Cojo, while Coridon, who had apparently tried to flee before, is given as “broke out of his chains and ran away”.<sup>69</sup> One year later, Dora was captured during an expedition; she said she had escaped from *Jakobi* five years earlier.<sup>70</sup> In fact, the escapes never stopped because long after the Aluku had retreated to neighbouring French Guyana and the remaining maroon communities had undertaken to return new deserters, some enslaved workers still opted for freedom by escaping into the forest. For example, in 1810 it was recorded at *Jakobi* that Florus, Pieter, Mentor and Hercules had been gone for eight-and-a-half years, Andries for five years and the boy Quamina for ten years. Three more men — Kees, Kinsbergen and De Ruiter — are noted as gone for good in the slave list of 1829. Kinsbergen and De Ruiter had arrived in Suriname from Africa only nine years earlier.<sup>71</sup> It is also striking that in the early days of this plantation, under the first owner Jacoby, some of the enslaved were Native Americans: a man named Spagniol who worked as a fisherman for the plantation and the women Tarie, Rosa and Klein Marie, who all worked in the plantation house kitchen. Many plantations had a few Native Americans working as slaves in the early period, almost always for similar relatively light tasks.

The complex nature of the lives of the enslaved and their relationship to marronage is illustrated by the events prior to the attack on *Jakobi*. In 1773, Boni travelled secretly with a few confidants through the Cottica region, in which *Jakobi* was located, and held talks with the enslaved on the plantations about possible attacks. He led a restless life at this point. Not long before, in September 1772, the colonial army had (with the help of a betrayal) captured Boni’s headquarters Buku in the middle of the marshes of northeast Suriname, which had been thought impregnable. These were the circumstances in which Boni and his companions arrived at *Jakobi*. They ate there and spoke to a “mulatto”,<sup>72</sup> almost certainly the enslaved carpenter and mill builder Jan, one of the most important men in the plantation hierarchy.<sup>73</sup> Given Jan’s skills and his appraised financial value,<sup>74</sup> he was clearly important to the plantation owner and must have enjoyed the man’s trust. As a mulatto, Jan also enjoyed a privileged position over ordinary enslaved workers, such as an exemption from hard labour in the fields and larger portions when food and clothes were handed out. At the same time, men such as Jan and often the *bastiaan* or *basya* too (the highest-ranked slave) were the natural leaders of the enslaved community, including sometimes in

spiritual respects, who took responsibility for the welfare of the Black plantation population. They were therefore frequently the people who planned rebellions or attempted escapes and maintained contacts with the maroons.

In this instance, Jan took these tasks upon himself, even though he had a great deal to lose because of his privileged position. That Boni sat down to eat with him was an important symbolic gesture of trust. What was more, Boni and his men were offered gifts by various plantation residents during this meeting.<sup>75</sup> It remains unclear if any agreements were made and if so what, but when Boni and his associates actually carried out their attack five months later, the entire enslaved population of *Jakobi* fought back. The plantation was attacked from three sides under cover of rain — which comes down with such force in the tropics that it can make a great deal of noise.<sup>76</sup> However, a guard sounded the alarm, upon which the enslaved residents put up a stand, which suggests they may have been preparing for the attack. They defended the plantation fiercely, calling out “that assaulting their plantation was no child’s play”. Inspired by their resistance, the Europeans on the plantation, who had taken refuge in the director’s house, started to shoot at the assailants, using weapons that included a cannon. Boni’s fortunes turned and he was forced to retreat.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the facts that the *Jakobi* enslaved came so close to freedom and that the attackers probably included friends and relatives — Suku himself led one of the three groups attacking the plantation — that was still not enough to persuade them to leave the plantation and set off with the maroons into the forest. Attacking “their plantation” was no child’s play, they called, which was their way of saying that they were attached to this place in a complex manner. Not to the system of slavery, but to the place where they had been born and lived their whole lives with one another and where they could be sure of certain basic necessities and a roof over their heads. At that point, the plantation was home to forty-eight adult men, fifty-one women, twenty-four boys and twenty-eight girls — 151 enslaved people in total living in twenty-eight wooden homes with roofs of dried palm leaves. Seventeen of the adults were old or disabled, twenty-three of the children were under ten, some very young, and one child was paralysed. All these people, over a quarter of the total population, would have found it impossible to go off with the maroons. It would have been difficult for the women (a further third of the plantation population) to leave too as they were responsible for caring for the very young and the elderly. That was what made them a community.

## STRUGGLE AND RESISTANCE

The most explicit answer to the question of what slavery meant for the enslaved is the multitude of different forms of struggle and resistance against that system. One aspect of this was the formation of an autonomous culture. This applied to the other Dutch slave colonies in the Americas, including Curacao and also in relation to Rotterdam: an autonomous culture, marronage and fighting back were clear answers to what slavery meant to the enslaved. The Maas Chamber of the West India Company did not play a role on Curacao, which had been assigned to the Amsterdam Chamber. But there were certainly traders, sailors, soldiers, government officials and others with roots in Rotterdam on the island. One example was the navy officer Albert Kikkert, who would end his life as the governor of the colony (1816–1819). While in the navy, he had been stationed in Rotterdam for a long period, but he lived on the island from the late 1780s. He was married to a woman from a well-known colonial family, the Van Uytrechts, and he owned several plantations through his wife. His aide-de-camp Hendrik Willem de Quartel was a true Rotterdam man; he too married a daughter from the island's colonial elite, Sara Schotborgh. He owned several enslaved people, including Emilie, whose two sons Hendrik and Willem were freed by him and given the surname Van Kwartel. It seems highly probable that these boys were the Black half-brothers of the five White children who De Quartel fathered with Sara. There are still people with the surname Van Kwartel living on Curacao today. Emilie herself was not manumitted.

Kikkert is best known as the opponent of Tula, who led one of the largest slave rebellions in Dutch history; it lasted from 17 August to mid-September 1795 and for a while seemed to herald the liberation of half the island from the system of slavery. The rebellion started on the Knip/*Kenepa* plantation, which was owned by Kikkert's father-in-law. Tula was one of the enslaved men on the plantation. One day, he refused to work any longer for Van Uytrecht. Considerable preparation had clearly gone into this act because numerous others immediately joined Tula, including some from neighbouring plantations. Tula's right-hand man Karpata was waiting for him there with other rebel slaves. Bastiaan Karpata was one of the enslaved on Kikkert's plantation. On the Sint Kruijs/Santa Cruz plantation, Tula, Karpata and a core group of rebels swore an oath of loyalty to one another and drank *awa di huramentu*, a potion with magical properties.<sup>78</sup> The group included Louis Mercier, who had probably escaped slavery on Saint-Domingue/Haiti, and Pedro Wakau, who came from Kikkert's plantation.

At that point, Kikkert was the commander of the navy vessel *Ceres* anchored off the island. When news of the rebellion reached him, in which his own slaves were apparently playing a key role, he set off at once for the plantation with sixty-six armed civilians. But they were overpowered and forced to flee.

The colonial authorities changed their strategy and decided to play for time until they could gather strength. They sent a priest named Schinck to negotiate with Tula and his men. Schinck had always been concerned about the lot of the enslaved and he spoke their language. The authorities therefore assumed that the rebels would trust Schinck to some extent, and they were right because he was welcomed warmly. He entered into lively discussions with Tula. Schinck saw it as his task to restore the rebels' confidence in the system of slavery so that "everything could calm down again and return to as it was before and I would regret it deeply if I were their priest and had to see them lapse into error and calamity". But Tula's position was clear: "We have been abused too much [...] we are not seeking to harm anyone, we just want our freedom; the French negroes have obtained their freedom [in the rebellion on Haiti], Holland has been captured by the French, and now we should be free here too". So it turned out Tula was fully aware of the international political situation and he did not agree to Schinck's proposals.<sup>79</sup>

The rebellion lasted a month in total, during which the entire western half of Curacao was liberated for a brief period. Yet ultimately the rebels were defeated — with the help of Kikkert and his men — and Tula, Karpata, Mercier, Wakau and many others were taken prisoner. Wakau and Karpata were seized on the Sint Jan/*San Juan* plantation with the aid of twelve of Kikkert's slaves. They realized that the rebellion's prospects were no longer good, so they opted for security instead. A measure had also been introduced whereby rebels who handed over "leaders who have incited the negro slaves to rebel" alive to the colonial government would be granted "freedom from punishment and from all slave services".<sup>80</sup> The time-honoured policy of divide and rule did its job.

The leaders of the rebellion were given appalling punishments to deter the rest. Kikkert noted in his ship's log: "... broke two negroes on the wheel alive, scorched them, then beheaded them and placed their heads on the gallows, chopped the hand off one negro and smashed his head with a sledgehammer, and then hanged five".<sup>81</sup> Kikkert received a substantial reward for capturing Karpata, which was to be shared among

the slaves who had actually carried out the capture. One slave belonging to Kikkert's father-in-law Van Uytrecht who had revealed Tula's hiding place and helped to seize the rebel leader was rewarded with his freedom.<sup>82</sup> Schinck returned to the Netherlands an embittered man.<sup>83</sup>

It did not make any difference for the enslaved whether they lived under the control of someone from Rotterdam or someone from elsewhere. Their owner could be exceptionally cruel or perhaps relatively humane, but this was not affected by his geographical background; the system was the same in principle. It was that system within which the enslaved had to attempt to survive. They managed by practising an entire spectrum of forms of resistance, from very minor acts of disobedience or malingering that almost went unnoticed to overt physical resistance with the use of violence. The resistance could consist of deliberate, targeted actions such as marronage and rebellion but it could equally take the form of more unconscious acts and processes arising from the enslaved people's culture. That distinctive culture, which was partly hidden from the slaveholders' view, formed the basis and inspiration for resistance, if only because it meant not all aspects of the enslaved people's lives were controlled by the slaveholders. They decided for themselves which gods they worshipped, which in turn was a source of inspiration for them. The slave owners found this situation threatening, but they were unable to eradicate these practices however hard they tried. That is why there is still a vibrant Winti culture in Suriname and why the spiritual form that Catholicism takes among Afro-Antilleans contains many elements that would appear strange to the Pope but be quite familiar to the Afro-Surinamese. The most widely spoken language in Suriname was Sranan Tongo; even the slaveholders were forced to adopt it to some extent, although they could not understand all the nuances. The same applied to Papiamentu on Curacao, Bonaire and Aruba. The European slave names and plantation names were mainly used by the Europeans, while the enslaved people themselves used their own, quite different names for one another and the plantations they lived on. Kinship affiliations, social relationships and love affairs were also beyond the control of the slave owners and largely took place out of their sight too. If that meant the enslaved had to venture beyond the plantation boundary, they were prepared to accept the associated risk of harsh punishments if they were caught. Such actions could hardly be called unconscious resistance; it was more a case of defying the rules so that they could still live their own lives. In the final analysis, they usually knew the plantation they had lived on their whole lives (sometimes



for several generations) much better than the owners, directors or overseers, who generally did not stay there for long. That too gave the enslaved a certain power, all the more once these true residents of the plantations had obtained the right to farm their own small plots of land and keep poultry for their own use in addition to their slave labour. They were so successful in these endeavours that they started selling some of the produce, whereby the slaveholders became dependent on this enterprise. That in turn was a kind of power and consequently resistance. Such developments gradually undermined the whole system of slavery.

## ABOLITIONISM IN ROTTERDAM

The Netherlands too gradually became aware of all these different forms of resistance. There had always been Dutch people, in Rotterdam as much as anywhere, who had criticized the practice of slavery. In the second half of the eighteenth century, a century before the official abolition in 1863, the protests swelled to become a powerful voice.

Cornelis van Vollenhoven, a member of a leading merchant family in Rotterdam, penned a prize-winning essay in 1776 for instance that — while it did not go as far as advocating the abolition of slavery — did ask rhetorically what law gave Europeans the authority to treat part of God's fair creation as brutish cattle. As he wrote, they too were “creations of God, also created in God's own image and also called upon to eventually stand as angels next to His throne, and [so we should] treat them accordingly”.<sup>84</sup> He argued that this was why they should be converted to Christianity and be educated. At the same time, this would make it easier for them to do “their duty” and put an end to their resistance, with the plantations becoming more profitable as a result. This was a typical example of a nascent colonial paternalism.

However, a growing group of Rotterdam residents wanted to go further as they saw slavery as irreconcilable with Christianity and/or the ideals of the Enlightenment. Pamphlets and translations of anti-slavery books were published, plays on the subject were performed and poems were declaimed in public. Slavery was a hot topic among the intellectual elite of the city (and the Dutch Republic more generally), in particular among the Patriots, the progressive group of citizens who supported the ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity. Perhaps the best-known member of this group was the lawyer Pieter Paulus, the Rotterdam son of a burgomaster who himself later became a burgomaster. He also became the first chair-

man of the National Assembly of the Batavian Republic (the regime in the Netherlands from 1795, which was installed with the aid of the French Army). In the National Assembly in 1797, he explicitly rejected the slave trade and slavery, arguing that both were incompatible with the Christian faith and moreover “all people are equal by nature and all have the same rights, regardless of what their colour, shape or nation may be”.<sup>85</sup>

Even so, the National Assembly was not prepared to go so far as to abolish slavery, and once the French occupation ended in 1813, the dominant anti-revolutionary ideology pushed abolitionism into the background. Interest in the issue revived around 1840 in Rotterdam in particular under the influence of the British abolitionists, who received a ready hearing among the city’s English community (which was still substantial). The Dutch Rotterdam residents who spoke out openly against slavery were now to be found among the political Liberals on the one hand and the devout Protestant *Réveil* movement on the other. These two groups were not easily able to bridge the large differences in their ideological backgrounds and agree on how to set up an anti-slavery movement. But in a remarkable development for the time, the women in these groups jointly formed a ‘Ladies Anti-Slavery Committee’ (they used this English name!), which proceeded to submit a petition for the abolition of slavery to the king. The 128 women spoke of “the suffering of our fellow human beings [...] who have bodies just as we do, who feel pain and whose souls are no less susceptible to melancholy and grief than what we ourselves experience”.<sup>86</sup> The king was unpleasantly surprised.

Despite this, slavery was not legally abolished until 1863. Even then, it was only possible because of the pressure exerted by the enslaved themselves. In just the seven-month period before the abolition bill was passed, five articles appeared in the local newspaper *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* reporting on uprisings and resistance in the slave colonies and urging the minister to delay introduction of the new law no longer. Even once the Lower House of the Dutch Parliament had passed the bill, the Minister for the Navy still had to address the Upper House to persuade the parliamentarians there that if they delayed the abolition legislation any longer, there would be bloodshed in the slave colonies.<sup>87</sup> It all took so long in part because of endless debate about the size of the compensation to be paid per slave... to the slaveholders whose property was being expropriated! Not to the enslaved, generations of whom had been forced to work with no financial reward whatsoever.

## AFRO-ROTTERDAM AND MENTAL LEGACIES

Slavery has made its presence felt in Rotterdam from the time the system started down to this very day. That is first and foremost because there are Rotterdam residents with African roots. Slave owners who returned from the colonies regularly brought their most trusted Black attendants with them. These people became free after six months, or twelve months at most, as slavery did not officially exist in the Netherlands.<sup>88</sup> There were not many such people, but even so Rotterdam always had inhabitants who had once been enslaved and who could tell their own side of the story. For example, it is known that in the period 1750 to 1775 twenty-two Black women, fourteen men and nine children came from Suriname alone, plus one Native American boy. There would have been more in practice as not all individuals were recorded in the registers by a long way. This is clear from a random note in the records of Captain Beekman of the slaver *Jonge Isaac*, which belonged to Coopstad & (Isaac) Rochussen. In 1757, the captain paid a shopkeeper around twenty-four guilders “for clothes supplied to the Negro who sailed with the honourable gentleman”, namely light-blue trousers and jacket, a shirt with Frisian fur, an ordinary shirt and another pair of trousers.<sup>89</sup> There is no mention of a Black man in the ship’s register for this voyage. Perhaps the man was the captain’s personal attendant, perhaps he was a free Black man who had travelled as a crew member; whatever the case, he too walked the streets of Rotterdam — warmly clad.

There must undoubtedly have been many more people of African descent arriving in Rotterdam over time who have not left traces that we have discovered (to date). There would also have been Black sailors staying in Rotterdam, whether briefly or for longer periods, at the end of the nineteenth century after slavery was abolished who themselves, or whose parents, may have been born in slavery and who may even have fathered children in the city. Legally, everyone who came to the Netherlands after 1863 was free by definition but the social and psychological situation was somewhat different. The colonial migration to Rotterdam is dealt with elsewhere in this book. This chapter ends by considering the question of the mental legacy of slavery in Rotterdam.

As was mentioned above, the basis for the colonial, racial paternalism that replaced the formal segregation of slavery after 1863 can be traced back to abolitionism at the end of the eighteenth century and even more so in the nineteenth century. Africans and their African American descendants

were now definitely also regarded as human beings, but they were still seen as inferior, whose interest lay mainly in their exotic appearance and lifestyle and who needed to be civilized — the White Man's Burden. For instance, Snelleman, the director of the Rotterdam Ethnological Museum & the Prince Hendrik Maritime Museum (now the Wereldmuseum), wrote an enthusiastic review in 1928 entitled 'Negroes in Negroland' in which he discussed a book by a man named Delafosse with chapter titles such as 'The Negroes' Collectivism', 'Morality and the Negro', 'Negro Art' and 'Negro Literature'. Snelleman stressed the accuracy of this account of "this remarkable race of humans that we still do not know enough about" by emphasizing that the author "[has] lived among the negroes" and knew them "through and through". The entire review is about "*the negro*", treated as a distinct species that Snelleman tries but fails to understand. He concludes that he will probably never succeed because this would require him to "descend into the negro soul" and that soul is too far removed from "the civilized European" for true understanding.

In that same year, 1928, a Luna Park (amusement park) was built in Rotterdam for the Olympic Games, which were being held in the Netherlands. The park included a special 'negro village' with one hundred people who were brought over from Senegal and put on display. Reviews in the local Rotterdam newspapers spoke of "negro foolery", "their clearly primitive state of knowledge", "apelike eyes and thick lips" and "frumpy women".<sup>90</sup>

These attitudes did not really change when American jazz music became popular around the same period, in Rotterdam as much as anywhere in the Netherlands. After all, the expectation was that it should be played by "real negroes". A growing group of Afro-Surinamese migrants took advantage of this by presenting themselves as African Americans. The most talented among them laid the foundations for Dutch jazz, which was comparable in popularity to rap music today. Rotterdam had several so-called Negro clubs; the Mephisto was perhaps the most popular in all of the Netherlands. Not only were the musicians at these clubs Black, the waiters were also Afro-Surinamese. Even so, many Dutch people were not happy with this "monkey music" and a government minister tried to have these "negro cabarets" closed at the end of the 1930s. But even people who enjoyed the music still betrayed signs of the racial paternalism of the past in their attitudes. For example, the chairman of the social democratic party SDAP, Vorrink, who came from the

Rotterdam area, said that he had a weakness “for negroes and their art”. He thought their music had “a primeval powerful rhythm, full of sultry passion for life, wild and with a grand simplicity”.<sup>91</sup> That was what the Black people — still a separate species — were capable of, but no more than that.

In fact, the real situation was somewhat different. Students of colour came to study in Rotterdam and some Afro-Surinamese people in and around Rotterdam joined the resistance against the Nazis. Yet they had little impact on the image of Black people, which remained the stereotype of rather dull, lazy people who were still savage at heart. This is evident from the notes that the Rotterdam author and poet Cor Vaandrager made while still at secondary school for his lessons on the colony of Suriname in the 1950s. Suriname was home to “Creole descendants of the freed negro slaves”. “These ‘town negroes’, as they are called, are a big problem for Suriname. That’s because they had a really bad experience on the plantations, so it’s impossible to persuade them to get out of the city and start working”. In contrast, the other (Asian) ethnic groups in Suriname were “excellent workers” and “talented traders”, according to the notes. But the Afro-Surinamese had had a “really bad experience” and that was why they were lazy.

When these reflections by Vaandrager on his childhood were published — without any further commentary — by one of the Netherlands’ leading publishers in 1971, the mass migration from Suriname to the Netherlands, including Rotterdam, was just gaining momentum. That picture of the relatively uncivilized, lazy Afro-Caribbean people was part of the mental legacy among the people of Rotterdam that determined the reception of the new “fellow citizens”.

The image people had of the descendants of slavery was steeped in notions of inequality, a continued belief that they were different and inferior, while the actual story of slavery receded from history. That explains the rather depressing and telling title of a brochure that was published in Rotterdam in 1975: ‘The Surinamese are also Rotterdam citizens’. In twenty pages, various Rotterdam church institutions explain how the city should deal with the “problems” these migrants had with housing, employment, education and social welfare. This was preceded by a history lesson covering one-and-a-half pages to explain why the Surinamese belong with “us”: “Almost half of the current population of Suriname [...] consists of the descendants of slaves who were exploited on plantations by



3.4 *Information brochure for the people of Rotterdam about the Surinamese in the city, published by church institutions in 1975.*

our forefathers.” That was how little the Rotterdam community knew, and how little the Rotterdam community apparently wanted them. On the other hand, this booklet was also a product of that same Rotterdam community and clearly an attempt to foster understanding and build bridges.

At present, one in every eight Rotterdam residents has ancestors who once lived in slavery in the Atlantic region. Research shows that one in five reports of discrimination is made by Black people with African or Afro-Caribbean roots.<sup>92</sup> These reports concern persistent associations with the Dutch tradition of Saint Nicholas (*Sinterklaas*) and his blackface attendant Black Pete (*Zwarte Piet*), the history of slavery, remarks about appearance (often hair and lips), situations at school, ‘jokes’, and prejudice in school recommendations and job application processes. Moreover, discrimination is encountered everywhere: it comes from teachers, colleagues, managers, police officers, school heads, temping agencies, shop staff, bus and tram conductors, waiters, neighbours, road users, friends and children.

*Are You the Mayor?* is the title of the autobiography by the Afro-Dutch woman Joyce Sylvester, based on a remark someone made during her inaugural reception as the mayor of the Dutch town of Naarden in 2016.<sup>93</sup> These are not arbitrary incidents: they are the result of a widely held mindset, a legacy that is embedded in institutions and internalized in people's mental makeup.<sup>94</sup> This does not just apply to Rotterdam, of course.

## IN SHORT

This brief overview of a relatively little-known but crucial aspect of Rotterdam's past shows that a city's history has many different components and perspectives, extending far beyond the city boundaries. Exploring the local history in depth also gives a great deal of insight into the national and international story. In this case, it reveals how a large part of the economy was linked to the slavery-related activities of the city, the country and other nations.

It is almost impossible to calculate the economic impact of two and a half centuries of the slave trade and slavery for the Netherlands, and Rotterdam more specifically, although attempts have been made. But how important is that question anyway? It has sometimes been implied that if the economic impact had been limited, it would also make the system of slavery less important as a historical phenomenon. Furthermore, if the economic benefits are to be determined, then so should the costs in the broad sense. But this aspect tends to receive much less attention, certainly in terms of the costs for the victims. Such calculations are virtually impossible anyway, as it is not clear what should be taken into account and what not.

That brings us to the debate on reparations. The cost-benefit analysis that is sometimes made in this regard can give the impression that slavery would not have been so bad if only the enslaved had been paid a wage for their labour. But reparations are about more than just the economic aspect. They are also about the systematic psychological, emotional, intellectual and cultural harm caused to the communities of the descendants of the enslaved. The debate should also encompass the damage caused to the psyche of descendants of the enslavers. They have hardly started their emancipation from a pattern of thinking and acting based on colonial assumptions of ethno-cultural superiority and inferiority. There is much to be repaired there too.

This chapter has unambiguously refuted the oft-heard argument that slavery should not be judged according to today's standards: "it was nor-



mal back then”, “everyone did it” or “they didn’t know any better”. For the people who were enslaved, slavery was *not* normal and they never accepted it. From the very first moment to the last, they fought against and resisted it in every way they could. That is especially the case if we include the inner strength of the enslaved that led to the development and maintenance of a distinctive culture which their oppressors had to acknowledge and adapt to in some regards, for example with the language. But in the Netherlands too, including Rotterdam, there have always been voices that were at the very least critical of the slave trade and slavery, which they saw as uncivilized, inhuman and unchristian. There were always preachers, writers and other intellectuals who did *not* find the system of slavery in the Atlantic normal and who spoke out about it.

It has also been shown that thousands of people from Rotterdam, and many more Dutch people in general, saw slavery with their own eyes through their positions in the colonial system. It might all have been happening far away, but many stories of slavery came to Rotterdam and were heard, whether or not they were critical accounts. Financiers and plantation owners in Rotterdam were in constant contact with their correspondents overseas, who sent them news of slavery in amongst the business information.

After 1863, the history of slavery gradually faded from the collective memory of the city and the country. However, this was not the case for the physical traces, not even after the bombing of Rotterdam by the Nazis in 1940, as most of the archives containing records relating to slavery survived. Those meticulous accounts and letters that say so much and yet remain silent about so much — but that too is very revealing, such as the complete lack of ‘Black’ ego documents — were all seen by Rotterdam residents. Yet for a long time, little or nothing was done with them. Just as in the past, you have to be open to hearing the ‘other’ side of the story. That also applies to the more informal archives of the descendants themselves. There are many more physical and immaterial sources that could be researched, such as stories, songs, sayings and idioms. Researchers do not even need to visit Africa, Suriname or the Caribbean islands to do this as these sources can be found in the city itself, perhaps in the researcher’s own home street.

Finally, to return to an aspect mentioned earlier, what are the mental legacies of this history for all the groups involved? What is meant by ‘mental legacy’, actually? This refers at any rate to ways of thinking about



3.5 Black Lives Matter demonstration in Rotterdam, 3 June 2020. Photo: Thomas van den Berg (<https://www.esteronline.nl/black-lives-matter-demonstratie-in-rotterdam/>).

yourself and about others and their place in the world with which groups with a shared cultural history are raised from birth in an often unconscious process and that are produced by specific historical developments. These unconscious assumptions and worldviews are passed down the generations and determine how people behave. Only when people are made aware of this does it become possible to accept that legacy, or try and rid themselves of it.

It is probably too soon to arrive at an overview of the legacy of Dutch slavery in all its aspects. While it is true that over 150 years have passed since the abolition of slavery, that history is only now gradually becoming acknowledged, and consequently the legacy is only now becoming visible. That applies to all the descendants, White, Black and others. It was not that long ago that Afro-Rotterdam women were undergoing painful processes to straighten their hair because straight hair was considered more beautiful than their natural curls. And just how telling did that make the huge Black Lives Matter demonstration in Rotterdam on 3 June 2020?

## NOTES

- 1 This chapter is an abridged and translated version of: Van Stipriaan, *Rotterdam in Slavernij*.
- 2 Near what was then the important slave port of Djèki (Jacquin), close to the modern-day city of Cotonou.
- 3 See <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database> (hereinafter TSTD).
- 4 Also called Ardra.
- 5 Called Fida by the Dutch and Whydah by the English.
- 6 Modern-day Benin alone has forty-two different ethnic groups, most of which have their own language. The people who lived in the area in the seventeenth century had largely come from neighbouring regions and settled there between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries.
- 7 The author has applied a form of epic concentration here. The term ‘*sippi*’ was used by the enslaved and their descendants in Suriname, but the *Rotterdam* set sail for Curacao in 1676; it is not known what term was used there and then to designate the communal experience of the journey. However, the phenomenon of a bond among the enslaved who had been on the same ship was found everywhere (Mintz & Price, *De geboorte*, 28).
- 8 This study is restricted to the trans-Atlantic slave trade because much less is known about Rotterdam’s involvement in slavery in Asia; moreover, slavery in the East was somewhat different in nature, as are the repercussions today.
- 9 Doormont & Vroom, *Little London*, 198–199.
- 10 See Roessingh, *Inlandse tabak*, 391–396; Davids, *The Scholarly Atlantic*, 241; Visser, *Verkeersindustrieën*, 155.
- 11 Bijlsma, *Rotterdams Amerika-vaart*, 133; Enthoven & Klooster, *The Rise and Fall*, 99–100. See also Christian J. Koot, *A Biography of a Map in Motion: Augustine Herrman’s Chesapeake*, p. 40. Walker, *Ghost Walls*, 91.
- 12 Walker, *Ghost Walls*, 95. The Dutch Minister of Social Affairs Wouter Koolmees recounted this appalling story in his speech to mark Ketī Kotī, the celebration of the abolition of slavery, on 1 July 2019 [<https://koninkrijksrelaties.nu/2019/07/02/minister-koolmees-kennisachterstand-over-slavernijverleden-inhalen/>] (accessed 2 July 2019).
- 13 NA, 1.05.01.02, 1166.
- 14 NA, 1.05.06, 929B.
- 15 Van der Schoor, *Stad in aanwas*, 231, 327–331. In the mid-seventeenth century, a labourer would typically earn 300 guilders per annum and a successful merchant 3,000 guilders.
- 16 See Alex van Stipriaan, *Rotterdam in slavernij*, 98 fig. 3.
- 17 See <https://www.slavevoyages.org/>
- 18 Piet Heyn (1577–1629) was born in Delfshaven, the dedicated port built for Rotterdam’s rival Delft, another of the three towns in the Maas Chamber of the West India Company. Heyn settled in Rotterdam in 1611, and later he was even invited to join the civic government (see Gerrit Verhoeven, *De derde stad*, 299).
- 19 Alex van Stipriaan, *Rotterdam in slavernij*, 97.
- 20 Bijlsma, *Rotterdams Amerika-vaart*, 126–127.
- 21 Minneapolis, James Ford Bell Library, B1482, De Mey van Streefkerk Papers, current accounts for the years in question.
- 22 See Boekholt & De Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school*, 115.
- 23 Guinea was the area of West Africa where the most enslaved people were put onto ships.

- 24 J. E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 288-289.
- 25 TSTD, *Argyle*, journey ID 20680; 76684; 76783; 77039; 76884.
- 26 Inikori, *Africans*, 288-289; TSTD, *Judith (a) Ruby*, journey ID 76713; *Mermaid*, journey ID 77048, 76363; *Princess Amelia*, journey ID 76814.
- 27 [<https://www.theycametheystayed.com/p151.htm#115640>] (accessed 12 February 2019)
- 28 SAR, ONA, 1510-144; Paesie, *Lorrendrayen*, 130.
- 29 TSTD. This voyage stands out for the low mortality rates during the crossing — 9 per cent and 5 per cent for the two ships — and the relatively small proportions of women and girls — 13 per cent and 18 per cent. The mortality among enslaved men on Saint-Domingue was probably much higher while the conditions would have been slightly better for the women.
- 30 *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek*, 639.
- 31 Klosa, *Die Brandenburgische-Africanische Compagnie*, 151; Paesie, *Lorrendrayen*, 136.
- 32 Paesie, *Lorrendrayen*, 43-49.
- 33 TSTD.
- 34 Grimm, *Heeren*, 82; Kees van Zandvliet 2018, 221
- 35 See <https://www.rotterdaminkkaart.nl/gebouwde-stad/patriciershuis-van-josua-van-belle-leuehaven-103/pointofinterest/MoreInfo/verhaal>. Part of the panelling of the main chamber is now in the collection of the Rotterdam Museum [<https://museumrotterdam.nl/collectie/item/36417?itemReturnStart=0&objectrow=14&itemReturnSearch=stijlkamer>] (accessed 28 January 2020).
- 36 Van Stipriaan, *Rotterdam in slavernij*, 458. In that period, all the coffee (like the sugar) came from the Caribbean slave colonies, including the colonies of other European countries. Curacao, for example, produced little sugar and no coffee of its own but it exported these commodities as an intermediary between the French and British colonies and the Dutch commodities market. Much of the coffee that arrived in Rotterdam was transported to the German hinterland after processing.
- 37 The Middelburgsche Commercie Compagnie (MCC) was the largest company at that time but this was in fact an association uniting multiple trading firms and merchants. For example, shortly after it was founded it already had eight merchants from Middelburg (in the Dutch province of Zeeland) as company directors and no fewer than 368 shareholders (Paesie, *Geschiedenis van de MCC*, 28-29).
- 38 See Van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 205-231.
- 39 *De Mercurius* 1764. The information on his inheritance shows that two freed slave women on Java, Alima van Sheribon and Amorante, had a right of usufruct of plots of land in his possession up to his death, which were now to be sold. [[https://het-trethrecht.sarchieff.nl/onderzoek/resultaten/archieven/zoekresultaat?mistart=36&mi-vast=39&mi-zig=236&mi-adt=39&mi-aet=54&mi-code=34-4.U248a012&mi-lang=n-l&mi-sort=last\\_mod%7Cdesc&mi-view=ldt](https://het-trethrecht.sarchieff.nl/onderzoek/resultaten/archieven/zoekresultaat?mistart=36&mi-vast=39&mi-zig=236&mi-adt=39&mi-aet=54&mi-code=34-4.U248a012&mi-lang=n-l&mi-sort=last_mod%7Cdesc&mi-view=ldt)] (accessed 13 December 2019).
- 40 See also <https://www.genealogieonline.nl/genealogie-richard-remme/I129584.php>
- 41 Rademakers, *Men beloofde*, 52; Den Hartigh, *Rotterdam*, 75.
- 42 Rademakers, *Men beloofde*, 54.
- 43 Rademakers, *Men beloofde*, 54.
- 44 SAR 68-312, 310, 168 and 675.
- 45 SAR 68-675 and 715.

- 46 Then one of three Dutch colonies adjoining Suriname (along with Berbice and Esse-  
quibo), which were merged to form British Guyana after 1814.
- 47 On the occasion of their silver wedding in 1771, the poem '*Silver Wedding Ode to Sir  
Johan Gerard François Meyners* etc.' by J.V.W.
- 48 Colin Campbell was probably one of those exceptions.
- 49 SAR, 68-215 (p. 177), Rocheteau to Hudig, 10 August 1778.
- 50 In 1769, when De Haan purchased Somerszorg, there were actually 107 enslaved  
people living on the plantation (SAR, 68-301).
- 51 Normally, an allowance was made for "an annual loss due to deaths which we pru-  
dently estimate at 2 Negroes during the year" (SAR, 68-317).
- 52 Oostindie, *Roosenburg*, 361.
- 53 Oostindie, *Roosenburg*, 361.
- 54 There had not been enough money to purchase new slave workers for a long while, and  
every year the number of deaths exceeded the number of births among the enslaved.
- 55 In this punishment, the person was bent around a stick placed under the knees pulled  
up to their chest, and while in this contorted position they were flogged with a whip.
- 56 SAR 68-331 (1852).
- 57 That language is now called Sranan Tongo. It is a Creole based on a West and Central  
African syntax and a vocabulary created from a mix of several languages: English,  
Portuguese, Dutch, French and German. Dutch was a minority language during the  
first century of colonization. A similar situation applied in Curacao, where the Creole  
language Papiamentu developed, with a vocabulary influenced more strongly by Por-  
tuguese and Spanish.
- 58 Jacoby lived in Paramaribo and left the day-to-day management in the hands of a  
plantation director.
- 59 Dragtenstein, *De ondraaglijke stoutheid*, 122-123.
- 60 The *basya*, also known as the *bastiaan* and, on Curacao, the *bomba*, was the Black slave  
overseer and therefore the highest-ranked person in the hierarchy of the enslaved on  
a plantation. He was also in charge of whipping the enslaved, making him a perfect  
example of the divide-and-rule policy on which the system of slavery was founded.
- 61 Hoogbergen, *De Boni-oorlogen*, 202-206. Incidentally, the Groot Marseille owners  
and managers learned their lesson from these attacks as a probate inventory from  
1810 shows a substantial increase in the stocks of weapons. The director's house had  
nine guns, there were four small cannons positioned at the gate and another three  
cannons in the courtyard in front of the house. (JFBL, B1482).
- 62 See Van Stipriaan, *Het dilemma*.
- 63 The area for growing food per head of the enslaved population fell by a tenth on La  
Paix/*Lapè* between 1759 and 1773 (from 1,385 m<sup>2</sup> to 1,245 m<sup>2</sup>), while the area per  
head doubled on Groot Marseille/*Jakobi* between 1742 and 1770 (from 1,039 m<sup>2</sup> to  
2,077 m<sup>2</sup>). (NA, 1.05.11.14, 692 and 702 and Minneapolis, J.F. Bell Library B1482,  
Groot Marseille probate inventories, 1742 and 1770)
- 64 De Beet, *De eerste Boni-oorlog*, 99, 107.
- 65 Boni and his associates were the invisible main protagonists in the journal by the  
soldier John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a five year's expedition against the revolted  
Negroes of Surinam* (1796); the book was translated into numerous languages and  
the many engravings based on drawings by Stedman have become iconic images of  
trans-Atlantic slavery.
- 66 Hoogbergen, *De Boni-oorlogen*, 78.

- 67 Based on Hoogbergen 1985: 131 and 205; J.F. Bell Library, B1482; NA, 1.05.11.14, 689.
- 68 Hoogbergen, *De Boni-oorlogen*, 85-86.
- 69 Minneapolis, J.F. Bell Library, B1482.
- 70 De Beet, *De eerste Boni-oorlog*, 93.
- 71 The slave trade with Africa had been banned since 1808 so they had been purchased illegally.
- 72 The offspring of a Black mother and White father. They were generally given a relatively privileged position among the enslaved, such as a job as a craftsman or in the household of the plantation owner or the director. Thus an association was created from an early stage between light skin colour and more appealing work.
- 73 Minneapolis JFBL, 1482, plantation probate inventory, December 1770; Hoogbergen, *De Boni-oorlogen*, 202-206.
- 74 Each enslaved person had a certain capital value for the owner; that value was greater if the enslaved person had useful skills and was in the prime of their life. Strong slaves who worked in the fields were valued at 600 to 900 guilders on Groot Marseille in that period. However, in 1770 Jan was valued at 1,800 guilders, making him the most expensive of them all. Minneapolis JFBL, 1482, plantation probate inventory, December 1770.
- 75 Hoogbergen, *De Boni-oorlogen*, 49-50.
- 76 In Suriname, these heavy downpours are called *sibibusi*, the brush that sweeps the forest clean.
- 77 Hoogbergen, *De Boni-oorlogen*, 202-206.
- 78 De Hoog, *Van rebellie*, 44-57; <https://www.genealogieonline.nl/genealogie-gomes/I15520.php> (accessed 12 February 2020).
- 79 All quotes in Paula, 1795, 268-271.
- 80 Quoted in De Hoog, *Van rebellie*, 54.
- 81 Quoted in Dros, *Het zwijgen*.
- 82 De Hoog, *Van rebellie*, 58.
- 83 Paula, 1795, 58-59.
- 84 Simon Vuyk, *Jan Konijnenburg*, 111; Paasman, *Reinbart*, 161-162.
- 85 Quoted in Paasman, *Reinbart*, 124.
- 86 Quoted in Janse, *De afschaffers*, 57 (n.137), 331.
- 87 Kuitenbrouwer, *De Nederlandse afschaffing*, 89.
- 88 The only exception to the rule was if it was the intention that they should return to the colony or if they had arrived in the Netherlands illegally and without permission, for example as a stowaway, in which case they were sent back to the colony.
- 89 SAR-68, 30.
- 90 *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 30 June 1928.
- 91 Kagie, *De huidskleur*, 99.
- 92 <https://mdra.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/MDRA-rapport-anti-zwart-racisme-in-regio-Amsterdam-DEF.pdf>. That study was carried out in the Amsterdam region but there is no reason to assume that Rotterdam would perform any better – on the contrary, it would likely fare worse, given that support for racist parties and other groups has long been much greater in Rotterdam than in Amsterdam.
- 93 Sylvester, *Bent ú de burgemeester*.
- 94 cf. <https://mdra.nl/racisme-is-structureel-in-nederland-zegt-onderzoeker-rob-witte-we-individualiseren-de-bekende-gevallen/>.



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