Paramaribo as Dutch and Atlantic Nodal Point, 1650–1795

Karwan Fatah-Black

Introduction

The *Sociëteit van Suriname* (Suriname Company, 1683–1795) aimed to turn Suriname into a plantation colony to produce tropical products for Dutch merchants, and simultaneously provide a market for finished products and stimulate the shipping industry.¹ To maximize profits for the Republic the charter of the colony banned merchants from outside the Republic from connecting to the colony's markets. The strict mercantilist vision of the Dutch on how the tropical plantation colony should benefit the metropolis failed to materialize, and many non-Dutch traders serviced the colony's markets.² The significant breaches in the mercantilist plans of the Dutch signify the limits of metropolitan control over the colonial project.

This chapter takes ship movements to and from Paramaribo as a very basic indication for breaches in the mercantilist plans of the Dutch: the more non-Dutch ships serviced Suriname relative to the number of Dutch ships, the less successful the Suriname Company was in realizing its “walled garden” concept of the colony. While Suriname had three European villages (Torarica, Jodensavanne and Paramaribo) in the seventeenth century, Paramaribo became its sole urban core in the eighteenth century. This centralization and

* The research done for this chapter was first presented in a paper at the European Social Science and History Conference 2010 in Ghent and figures prominently in the PhD dissertation *Suriname and the Atlantic World, 1650–1800* defended on 1 October 2013 at Leiden University.

- 1 *Octroy ofte fundamentele conditien, onder de welcke haer Hoogh. Mog. ten besten en voordeele van de Ingezetenen deser Landen de Colonie van Suriname hebben doen vallen in handen ende onder directie van de bewindthebberen van de generale Nederlandsche Geoctroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie* (Jacobus Scheltus, 1682); *Conditien, tussen de Dry Respectie Leden van de Societeyt van Suriname, geconvenieert in dato 21 May, 1683* (Amsterdam: Erfgenamen Paulus Matthysz, 1683).
- 2 Johannes Postma, “Breaching the Mercantile Barriers of the Dutch Colonial Empire: North American Trade with Surinam During the Eighteenth Century,” in *Merchant Organization and Maritime Trade in the North Atlantic, 1660–1815*, ed. Olaf Uwe Janzen, vol. 15, Research in Maritime History (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1998), 107–131.

urbanization was mainly due to the town's location near to where Suriname's main waterways flow into the Atlantic. This made the town both central to local, regional and transatlantic shipping routes.³ Sailing ships were able to go much further upstream to Torarica, Jodensavanne and many of the plantations, but this was rather unpractical given the strong currents and the great influence of the tide on the rivers. An analysis of ship movement to and from Paramaribo over a long period not only shows that the Dutch were not able to close off the colony at any time during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, but also that there were periods when they had more exclusive access to the colony than in others.

Obviously, ship movements do not denote either tonnage or value. The ships in the regional trade were about a fifth of the size of the trans-Oceanic freighters that sailed between Suriname and the Dutch Republic.⁴ However, given the absence of major technological divergence between intra-American and transatlantic shipping during the period, the relative numbers of Dutch versus non-Dutch ships give an indication of their relative importance to the colony. This chapter shows that while formal rules and regulations issued by metropolitan and local governmental bodies had some impact on trade and shipping, changes in credit systems that were used to finance plantations were a more significant determinant of the success of Dutch attempts at excluding non-Dutch shipping from the colony. The mercantilist scheme for the plantation colony only functioned when the Republic had the financial instruments to enforce control.

Historians of the British Atlantic have fairly well established the extent to which Atlantic trade networks crossed formal imperial boundaries.⁵ By taking the case of Suriname, the largest plantation colony in the Atlantic under Dutch rule, this contribution seeks to investigate the Dutch side of this system and argue that intercolonial networks were constitutive for the colony, that colonists and merchants found ways to cooperate and circumvent the rules and regulations, and that over the course of the eighteenth century prevailing credit systems impacted the salience of intercolonial shipping. The study

3 Karwan Fatah-Black, "Suriname and the Atlantic World, 1650–1800" (unpublished PhD diss., Leiden University, 2013), chapter 4.

4 For the period 1770–1793 the average size of the cargo on regional ships was 29.3 lasts (a last is approximately two tons or 4000 pounds). In the freight shipping between Suriname and the Dutch Republic the average cargo was 146.55 lasts. J.P. van de Voort, *De Westindische plantages van 1720 tot 1795. Financiën en handel* (unpublished PhD diss., Catholic University of Nijmegen, 1973), 242; Fatah-Black, "Suriname and the Atlantic World," appendix.

5 See for example the articles by David Hancock and John McCusker in *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, ed. John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

shows (1) how central intercolonial exchange was to the colonial project, (2) that the connectors between the colonies were not the prototypical Dutch middlemen, and (3) that Dutch metropolitan-led state institutions had only limited success in regulating the trade routes between Suriname and the Atlantic world.

Plantation Colonies in the Dutch Atlantic

In the Dutch historical literature on early modern Suriname the overwhelming dominance of the connection between Suriname and the Netherlands is taken for granted.⁶ And even though the existence of regional connections from Suriname has not been denied, these have not received a lot of attention from historians. The first scholar to take a detailed look at these connections was Johannes Postma, and in two articles he uncovered a world of connections, mainly operated by non-Dutch ships connecting the plantation colony to the Caribbean and especially to North America. In terms of figures and shipping data Johannes Postma has done groundbreaking work in this field by showing how multifaceted the connections between Suriname and the Atlantic world were. He showed that half the ships in Paramaribo in the eighteenth century were non-Dutch and hailed from non-Dutch ports.⁷ The data that he collected is presented in Graph 1. Given the cliché of the Dutch as middlemen in the Atlantic world and the mercantilist regulations that were to control shipping, it might therefore come as a surprise that Dutch shipping was not the only supplier of goods to Suriname. A second surprise in this regard will be that the colonists were banned from fitting out ships from the colony to regional destinations, even if they were Dutch. This is a world away from nodal points such as Curaçao and St. Eustatius where intercolonial connections were encouraged by the Dutch West India Company (WIC).

The importance of non-Dutch shipping for Dutch Atlantic colonies contradicts the prevailing image of the Dutch, who have often been praised for their role as intermediaries between the empires in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Piet Emmer summed up Dutch Atlantic activities as turning from

6 Karwan Fatah-Black, "Suriname en de wereld, 1650–1800: Een Atlantisch en mondiaal perspectief," *OSO – Tijdschrift voor Surinamistiek en het Caraïbisch gebied* 31, no. 2 (2013): 177–191.

7 Postma, "Breaching the Mercantile," 107–131.; Johannes Postma, "Suriname and its Atlantic Connections, 1667–1795," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), 287–322.

“aggressive and expensive” to profiting “from a neutral position *vis-à-vis* the imperial rivalries.”⁸ As the debate on the Dutch Atlantic progressed many have argued that the Dutch presence in the Atlantic remained sizeable, but mainly in areas of shipping and trade.⁹ Jan de Vries has emphasized that after the loss of Brazil the Dutch Atlantic activities did not simply retreat into shipping between imperial rivals and some plantation colonies were developed in the Guianas, but that the most notable development has been the increase in New World trade after 1680.¹⁰ The Dutch shipping that developed was more transatlantic than intercolonial.

As de Vries noted there was a tension in such an arrangement, because “the administrators represented the trading interests of the company and of the Republic more generally” and they were finding themselves “frequently at odds with the interests of settlers.”¹¹ This tension between settlers and administrators surfaced in the area of trade and shipping because of the apparent limits to Dutch freight shipping in the Atlantic. This limit was a new problem to the Dutch, for as Christian Koot discusses in this volume, the Dutch had been the ones providing cheap and versatile shipping services to the nascent English colonies in the Atlantic world. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth century Dutch actors remained eager to ship products across the ocean, but became unable or unwilling to profitably service the short shipping lines between American colonies that were needed to provision daily supplies or haul low value bulk goods such as molasses. Therefore – as Postma has shown for Suriname and Gert Oostindie for Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo – non-Dutch connections played an important role in expanding plantation production in Dutch colonies.¹² The result of this was that the Dutch colonies in the Atlantic had a nodal character. They were places where actors from a range of European

8 P.C. Emmer, “‘Jesus Christ was Good but Trade was Better’: An Overview of the Transit Trade of the Dutch Antilles, 1634–1795,” in *The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580–1880*, ed. P.C. Emmer (Aldershot: Ashgate 1998), 108–109.

9 Henk den Heijer and Victor Enthoven, “Nederland en de Atlantische wereld, 1600–1800. Een historiografisch overzicht,” *Tijdschrift voor Zeegechiedenis* 24, no. 2 (2005): 147–166; Gert Oostindie and Jessica Vance Roitman, “Repositioning the Dutch in the Atlantic, 1680–1800,” *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (2012): 129–160.

10 Jan de Vries, “The Dutch Atlantic Economies,” in *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, ed. Peter A. Coclanis (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 1–29, 12.

11 *Ibid.*, 13.

12 Gert Oostindie, “‘British Capital, Industry and Perseverance’ Versus Dutch ‘Old School’?: The Dutch Atlantic and the Takeover of Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo, 1750–1815,” *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* 127, no. 4 (December 2012): 28–55.

and colonial backgrounds came to organize their business, despite metropolitan restrictions. But while the need for such connections were obvious from a colonial-entrepreneurial perspective, the metropolitan institutions were not eager to accept the colonial project as one where they should provide military and institutional security and let merchants and traders do as they please (Figure 2.1).

Institutional Context

Suriname was not ruled by the WIC alone. The WIC had been founded in 1621, and after a bankruptcy it was restarted in 1674 as the second WIC. The Company transformed from a combative Calvinist organization set up to sabotage Iberian-Atlantic power into a (slave) trade organization, and later one that mainly generated income from levying taxes on Atlantic voyages by private companies. During the second WIC it did rule several colonies, but these were mostly trading posts, rather than plantation or settler colonies. Despite their formal monopoly over the entire Atlantic Westwards of the Cape Colony in

FIGURE 2.1 *Number of ships per year in Paramaribo (slavers, Dutch freighters and non-Dutch ships), 1683–1795.*

SOURCE: DUTCH ATLANTIC CONNECTIONS DATABASE ([HTTPS://EASY.DANS.KNAW.NL/UI/DATASETS/ID/EASY-DATASET:33898](https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:33898)) AND POSTMA, SURINAME NORTH AMERICAN DATA COLLECTION (PSNADC). SLAVE SHIPS MOSTLY ARRIVED DIRECTLY FROM AFRICA. THE BILATERAL FREIGHTERS SAILED DIRECTLY BETWEEN SURINAME AND THE DUTCH REPUBLIC. THE NON-DUTCH SHIPS WERE PREDOMINANTLY FROM NEW ENGLAND AND OFTEN RETURNED TO THE SAME PORT THEY HAD ARRIVED FROM.

Southern Africa, they out-sourced the set-up and management of plantations to private companies. One of these was the Suriname Company, which was chartered by the Dutch States General and consisted of three parties, who all had an equal share, and delegated directors to oversee the colony. The three parties which made up the Suriname Company in 1683 were the WIC, the city of Amsterdam and the family Aerssen van Sommelsdijck. That last party sold their share in the company in 1771, after which the WIC and Amsterdam both owned half the colony.

The Suriname Company had a different aim than the WIC had in the Atlantic. The directors bore the responsibility for striking a balance between gaining revenue from taxing shipping as well as privately owned plantations, and to simultaneously guarantee that there was a profitable business climate in which plantations could prosper. This meant that the planters should be provided with capital, land, labor and protection. At the same time the colony was set up with the idea of benefiting the Dutch Republic as a whole by increasing the shipping, trade and power of the republic. The charter of the colony of Suriname covered all these areas, and created a general outline that was followed for much of the period between its inception in 1683 and the disbanding of the Suriname Company in 1795.

The central ordinance that is of importance here is article XII from the 1682 charter, which reads:

That the trade and navigation on the aforementioned colony [Suriname] shall only take place directly from this country [the Republic]. Fruits, wares and produce are not allowed to go anywhere else than to this country. The same goes for the provisions needed by said colony. They can only come from this country, and from nowhere else.¹³

The article in the charter is clear in this respect, and for the directors this was not just lip service to the interests of their fellow countrymen. The first governor who ruled the colony for the Suriname Company reported in his letters that he indeed tried to prevent non-Dutch ships trading in the colony. Also, in the following decades several committees discussed how to preserve the XIIth article of the charter despite infringement by North-American vessels. In the end article XII did not hold, and the Suriname Company directors moved to issue a bylaw in 1704 that allowed limited trade by non-Dutch captains.¹⁴ The Suriname Company did

¹³ *Octroy ofte fundamentele conditien*, 9.

¹⁴ J.A. Schiltkamp and J.Th. de Smidt, eds., *West Indisch Plakaatboek* (Amsterdam: Emmering, 1973), 253–255.

maintain the ban on Suriname-based regional trade until 1783 when the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784) forced the colonists to rely on regional supply lines and they were allowed to fit out their own vessels.¹⁵ The Suriname Company clearly had a rather different stance on intercolonial trade in the Caribbean than did the WIC. The Suriname Company attempted to close off the connection between Suriname and regional ports, but over time they had to cave in and issued regulations allowing limited intercolonial and interimperial trading.

Intercolonial Beginnings

Connections across imperial borders in the Atlantic world were not only common; they were constitutive of Dutch efforts to settle on the “Wild Coast”. Not a single Dutch Guianese settlement would have grown and blossomed without creating ties to other non-Dutch colonies and relying on the resources available under the formal rule of other empires and states operating in the Americas. Healthy colonists were one such resource. The disease environment on the Wild Coast deteriorated with the arrival of forms of malaria in the seventeenth century. Colonists who had spent and survived a first year in the tropics were therefore a much sought after resource, and conflicts arose between the Dutch and the English over retaining colonists once the colony had changed hands. Much of the Dutch experience with sugar planting, enslavement and colonial trade had its origin in the short-lived experience in Dutch Brazil (1630–1654). The exodus of Jews and the Dutch during the Portuguese reconquest of Brazil resulted in a dissemination of experienced colonists throughout the Atlantic. By a myriad of routes some of these people ended up in Suriname and other Caribbean colonies.

The main push for plantation activities in Suriname was initiated by the English colonization from Barbados, which had been ordered by Lord Willoughby of Parham in 1651. Later, Suriname was taken from the English by the States of Zeeland under the leadership of Abraham Crijnssen in 1667. When in 1668 the English planters who had remained in Suriname requested from the Zeelanders the right to continue trading with Barbados, Crijnssen, as the acting Zeelandic governor, balanced between appeasing the English and limiting the trade. For Barbados the supplies of Surinamese wood were of great necessity because years of sugar cultivation had rid the land of wood. After a fire caused the “total ruin and destruction of the town in Barbados” the colonists requested to be allowed to ship “timber for the rebuilding of the city.”¹⁶

15 Ibid., 1056–1057.

16 Request by Major Bannister and the English inhabitants to Commander Crijnssen, July 1668, *Plakaatboek*, 13–15.

Crijnssen wanted to showcase the Dutch as good “allies and neighbors,” and allowed for the shipment of wood to take place in exchange for Barbadian sugar (most likely for re-export to the Dutch Republic), but only on Dutch vessels. About further trade he wrote that he “could not allow the trading from Barbados.”¹⁷ On the other side Dutch vessels were blocked as well. Ships from Zeeland refused to take cargo to Barbados after two of them – with the consent of Crijnssen – went to Barbados and were confiscated there for breaking English navigation laws.¹⁸

Jewish merchants played a role in connecting Suriname to non-Dutch colonies. The migration of Jews to Suriname from Barbados – and after Zeeland’s take-over in the 1660s from Suriname back to Barbados and onwards to Jamaica – created ties between the two colonies that were outside of the control of the Zeelanders. While the Zeelanders were ill at ease with the existence of this trade route, they saw its potential use. In February 1670 Governor Lichtenberg wrote that Louis Dias from Barbados told Isack de Mesa (his brother-in-law) that “furnishing a ship to bring planters from Suriname to Barbados was only a pretext to get a ship to Suriname, to see if they could trade in wood between Suriname and Barbados.” The captain indeed found no one to leave the colony, and asked to export some wood, which Lichtenberg allowed him. This bold move by Dias worked, and Lichtenberg asked Isack de Mesa to write Dias:

...if those from Barbados bring sugar or other goods, and those of Barbados would allow the Dutch ships with cargo, there would be no objections from this side, and a regular trade could be established.¹⁹

The governor argued that this “would be a very good thing for Suriname.”²⁰ The Jews who previously resided on Barbados went on to tell Lichtenberg that he should “create a trade between New England and this colony, and bring horses,

17 “*conne ’t nogotieren van Barbados niet toestaan.*” Answer by Commander Crijnssen to the request by Major Bannister: Ibid., 15–17.

18 The case of the Captains Simon Aertsen and Jacob de Kleijne, 1668–1669. Zeeuws Archief (hereafter ZA), Staten van Zeeland, entry 2035, inv. no. 140–146. Transcribed in *Zeeuwse archivalia uit Suriname en omliggende kwartieren, 1667–1683* (Paramaribo: Surinaams Museum, 2003).

19 “*als die van de Barbados suiker of eenige soodanige waren hier brachten, en die van de Barbados wilden toelaten, dat de duijtsche schepen ende met laddingh daer komen mochten, dat van dese kant geen swarigheijt soude gemaect worden om alsdan een vaste negotie te stabiliseren.*” Ibid.

20 “*een brave saeck voor Surinam soude sijn ende den tijt ons in korte, of het lucken sal, sal leeren.*” Ibid.

flour, and fish in exchange for *Kilduijvel* [rum] and syrup [molasses].” Lichtenberg was tempted by the idea and asked Henrico de Casseres to contact his correspondents in his name, to see if such could be organized because that “would be very important for the sugar mills in Suriname and greatly increase the exchange of goods between both places.”²¹ After these initial steps the outbreak of hostilities with England in 1672 during the so-called Dutch “Year of Disaster” closed off the trade again. In that year several European states invaded the Dutch Republic and the trade between Suriname and Barbados – or any other English port for that matter – was hampered. The lack of intercolonial and interimperial contacts in the Zeelandic period of the colony might partly explain the lack of success the Zeelandic colonists had in developing Suriname. The hostilities in Europe not only impacted the intercolonial exchanges but also strained the transatlantic shipping connections.

The prolonged conflict of the Dutch with the combined forces of indigenous Caribs and Arawacs (and on occasion helped by escaped Africans) that broke out in the late 1670s strengthened the need of the colonists to reestablish a regional connection to acquire supplies to be able to combat the indigenous assailants.²² The return of contact with Barbados was made in 1677 by Surinamese Governor Abel Thisso requesting supplies for the sustenance of his armed forces from his British counterpart on Barbados, Governor Jonathan Atkin.²³ After the initial reestablishment of contact Barbados “became Suriname’s most important colonial provider for provisions of all kind,” with private merchants joining in the trade.²⁴ As Claudia Schnurmann has shown, the Jewish settlers Louis Dias and Samuel Cohen Nassy (a Jewish entrepreneur in Suriname) played a prominent role in maintaining this connection, Nassy on the Surinamese side, Dias on the Barbadian side. They had organized intercolonial shipments in 1677 of limestone in exchange for wood.²⁵ When in

21 ZA, 8 Feb 1670, entry 2035 inv. no. 204–206. Ibid.

22 R. Buve, “Gouverneur Johannes Heinsius, de rol van Van Aerssens voorganger tijdens de Surinaams-Indische Oorlog, 1678–1680,” *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 45 (1966): 14–26.

23 Claudia Schnurmann, *Atlantische Welten: Engländer und Niederländer in amerikanisch-atlantischen Raum: 1648–1713* (Köln: Böhlau 1998), 22.

24 Claudia Schnurmann, “Atlantic Commerce and Nieuw Amsterdam/New York Merchants,” in *Jacob Leisler’s Atlantic World in the Later Seventeenth Century*, ed. Hermann Wellenreuther (Berlin: Lit Verlag 2009), 33–68, 46.

25 Schnurmann, “Atlantic Commerce” cites: National Archives of the Netherlands (hereafter NL-HaNA), 1.05.10.02 (Tweede West-Indische Compagnie [hereafter NWIC]) inv. no. 210; Amsterdam Municipal Archives (hereafter SAA) Notarial Archive (hereafter NA), 3250, Notary Hendrik Outgers fol. 40, 9 November 1680; NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC, inv. no. 344, 3 October 1679.

March 1678 the ship *Morgenstarre* with Captain Jan van der Spijck was sent to Barbados, David de Fonseca was on board as factor.²⁶ A year later Nassy and Governor Heinsius sent Jan van der Spijck out to Cayenne to bring in supplies.²⁷ Besides the Barbadian connection, Nassy also connected Suriname to Curaçao and New England, a connection already proposed to the Zeelanders by Surinamese Jews in the early days of their rule. While Curaçao remained of limited importance for Suriname, the connections to Barbados and New England continued. In 1680 Nassy's ship the *Trent* sailed the triangle New York – Suriname – Barbados. After the takeover of the colony by the Suriname Company, Nassy continued this trade and outfitted the *Betty* with Captain Marshall Cobie who sailed for Nassy from New York to Paramaribo and from there onward to Barbados in 1686.²⁸

When the Zeelanders had taken Suriname in 1667 they had attempted to choke the regional connection with Barbados, which had existed since the founding of the colony by the English, but the connection never disappeared completely. A new possible break-up of the connection came with the transfer of the colony into the hands of the WIC in 1682 and the Suriname Company in 1683, but again the regional connection proved stronger than restrictive measures from the metropolis. On the precedent of his role in other intercolonial shipments, Nassy made a bold move: in February 1683 he requested to be allowed to bring horses from New England to Suriname and to continue the voyage onwards with that same ship to bring “sugar in exchange to Holland or Zeeland.” According to Nassy the ship would bring about 100 to 150 horses, which could only be transported “in English ships.” The sugar to be shipped to Holland or Zeeland was the payment for those horses. The Suriname Company agreed on the “condition that those loaded sugars will be brought directly to Holland or Zeeland.”²⁹ The intercolonial connections proved to be a very practical solution to the problems that colonists encountered when setting up a plantation colony in the tropics, but they also severely challenged the monopolistic vision of the directors in the Dutch Republic. In the first decade and a half after the Zeelandic takeover of the colony both

26 ZA, entry 2035 inv. no. 302–304. Letter to John Atkins on Barbados, March 1678.

27 Ibid., ZA, entry 2035 inv. no. 376. Declaration by Captain Jan van der Spijck, 22 December 1679.

28 Postma Suriname North America Data Collection (hereafter PSNADC), forthcoming as part of the Dutch Atlantic Connections database, <https://easy.dans.knaw.nl/ui/datasets/id/easy-dataset:33898>.

29 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, Sociëteit van Suriname (hereafter SvS), inv. no. 212, “*Suickeren daar voor naer Holtt off Zeeld te voeren.*” Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren, 16 Nov 1683–Nov 1684.

Zeelandic and Jewish traders operated and set up the intercolonial and interimperial shipping connections, but already then, non-Dutch ships operated by North Americans started to take a significant share of the intercolonial trading.

Formalizing Non-Dutch Access to Suriname

In the 1680s Nassy continued to challenge the directors of the Suriname Company and the local Surinamese authorities by arguing against the restrictions imposed on the colony by the XIIth article in the charter. Nassy managed to convince the local council to allow several individual shipments. When Governor Aerssen van Sommelsdijck assumed the post of governor, the English ships kept arriving, and Sommelsdijck commented that he did not “find it reasonable or fair or in the interest of the colony to send the ships back.” But van Sommelsdijck realized that the laws of the Company needed to be upheld, and an English ship that arrived from Barbados was told “not to come here anymore,” and to warn the others “that this trade and shipping is now forbidden and closed to them.”³⁰ After Sommelsdijck assured the directors of the Suriname Company that he was doing his part in closing off the English trade, he went on to stress how important it would be to import horses, because “more than ten mills are standing still because of the lack of horses or other animals.” According to the governor this was all to the “noticeable detriment of both the private parties and the Company as well as the return ships.” The freighters were indeed sailing back with less sugar than they could load.

After the mutiny of 1688 in which Governor Van Sommelsdijck was killed, the governing Council spoke out strongly in favor of regional supplies. The mutiny mainly took place due to the lack of rations handed out to the soldiers. One of the officers wrote to the Directors of the Suriname Company in Amsterdam that the troops would have rebelled again if goods were not imported from the New England colonies to Suriname.³¹ When Nassy made another request to the Council in August 1689, they granted him the right to bring goods from English ships to shore. This, according to the Council, should prevent them sailing away to other destinations. It was of great importance

30 NL-HaNA, SvS, 1.05.03 inv. no. 212, “*niet hebbende redelijk, billijk, noch met de interesse van de colonie geoordeelt over een te komen het selvige terugge te senden*”...“*hier niet meer te coomen*”...“*dat haer dese negotie ende vaert verboden ende gesloten was.*”

31 Postma, “Breaching the Mercantile,” 114.

because they thought that the future of the colony depended on the goods brought from New England.³²

The non-Dutch trade in the period was comparable to ordinary coastal trade in content: mostly provisions, foodstuffs, building material and no luxuries. It connected North America and Barbados with Suriname and formed a web of connections between different regions on the Atlantic's Western Coast. Many skippers sailing to Paramaribo came there more than once, and often from the ports of Boston and New York. Especially on the import side the English North American colonies were important. They supplied the goods as requested by Nassy: provisions and horses.³³ Because Suriname had not yet become a full-fledged sugar plantation colony but was also engaged in trade with the Amerindians and logging, the ships that arrived from North America with provisions had hardly anything they could legally load to bring back there, since plantation products could only be shipped to the Dutch Republic. In 1678 no molasses of Dutch origins entered the Boston harbor.³⁴ However, the lack of wood on Barbados and the abundance of it upstream the Suriname River made triangular voyages between New England – Suriname – Barbados viable. The destination for the non-Dutch ships was Barbados. Returning to New England was another option, but not a route that was often taken. For example, ships did arrive from Rhode Island, but none of the ships that left Paramaribo in the early period declared it as their destination.³⁵

Sometimes the directors of the Suriname Company would allow sales to be made. While generally lenient when it came to horses, they would be stricter in cases that involved sugar. When an Englishman arrived in the colony of Suriname in 1701 to ship sugar he was refused his shipment. According to the governor he was using an old permit that was not even in his name. The captain was looking to transport sugar, a "high good" (a valuable commodity intended for the European market) according to the governor and forbade the captain to load the hold.³⁶ Many months later, the Board of the Suriname Company confirmed this policy of the governor. The decision was primarily based on the goods that the Englishman was trying to trade. In 1701 the

32 NL-HaNA, SvS, 1.05.03, Minuut-notulen van de ordinaris en extra-ordinaris vergaderingen van het Hof van Politie en Criminele Justitie, 12 March 1689–1710 January 1692; meeting of 4 August 1689.

33 Ibid.

34 Gilman M. Ostrander, "The Colonial Molasses Trade," *Agricultural History* 30 (1956): 77–84.

35 PSNADC.

36 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 229, Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren, Report of ships in Paramaribo, 5 December 1701.

Company Directors connived to bring horses on shore by turning a blind eye. If anything else was unloaded, however, all goods and the ship that brought them had to be confiscated.³⁷

The regional connection was efficient in supplying food and provisions. Captains had the option to sell their goods elsewhere and move onward to other ports in case there were problems on the Paramaribo market. The ships were also notably smaller than the large ocean going vessels of the Dutch. This resulted in a very quick turnover of English ships in Suriname. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1713) had no negative influence on the regional shipping, which increased tremendously over the war years. Despite the increase in ships (and therefore the availability of tonnage) the ships still retained waiting times of less than two months in port. The comparative advantage of regional shipping over transatlantic shipping hardly needs explaining. While vessels were indeed much smaller in the regional trade, their average waiting time in the colony also suggests that they were able to deal with local market conditions efficiently. By the end of the war their total number well exceeded that of Dutch ships.³⁸

The increase of non-Dutch regional shipping triggered a response from the directors of the Suriname Company. From their perspective it was undercutting their business, but they understood that the connection was fundamental to the survival of their colony. The directors of the Suriname Company also felt responsible for supporting the Amsterdam merchants connected to Suriname, rather than only the Company's own tax revenue. While the Dutch lacked any formal West India interest, the Suriname Company not only functioned as a company to manage the colony, but also as a special interest group for entrepreneurs with private interests in the colony. The issue of the regional trade, as discussed in den Heijer's contribution to this volume, had immediately come up during the drafting of the colony's charter in the 1680s. From time to time requests regarding the freeing up of the regional trade were sent to the directors, and the governor pleaded to allow English ships to sell their goods. The Suriname Company continued to discuss the issue of regional trade in their meetings. In 1702 they wrote an ordinance based on the advice of the commission they had instated. The plan was to only allow horse sales, and confiscate the entire ship and its cargo of anyone who tried to trade other goods. Such a strict order would likely have killed off the trade entirely if it had been implemented. Governor Van Der Veen wrote that he was disappointed by the fact

37 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 2, Minutes board meeting of the Suriname Company, 19 August 1701.

38 PSNADC.

that the Suriname Company had only allowed him to import horses, and had disallowed the buying of general provisions, which was “one of the two legs that the colony has to walk on.” He also made clear to the Board members that it was causing many political conflicts between him and the local governing council.³⁹

To resolve the issue the board in Amsterdam and their governor in Suriname had to consult with the local governing Council who would be instrumental in enforcing the law. They discussed an early draft of the order that came down to levying a tax on imported English horses, and to confiscate all other goods the North Americans brought to the colony. Especially the confiscation was deemed unreasonable by the councilors and they protested loudly. The Council argued that the board “did not have to worry” about the competition from New England.⁴⁰ The horses, their hay and water were said to take so much space on board the “small and hellish” ships that there was no space to carry any other merchandise.⁴¹ It is very likely that the Suriname Company directors knew that those arguments did not make much sense. However, they must have realized that if the colonists would not cooperate they could just let the ships enter Suriname illicitly and the Company would be powerless to police it efficiently.

The issue of liberalizing regional trade continued to be investigated by special commissions and remained a point of discussion in the boardroom of the Suriname Company. When planters asked in 1700 that they be allowed to organize coastal trade along the Coast of Spanish America the idea was completely buried.⁴² In 1703 the Suriname Company finally ordained that there could be imports from North America, provided that they kept to strict regulations.⁴³ The reluctant directors of the Suriname Company were realistic enough to allow for this indispensable interimperial trade.⁴⁴ This compromise between the colonists

39 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 229, Response to the order of the Suriname Company to ban English imports, 28 January 1702.

40 Many years later Governor Nepveu argued the opposite, namely that the flour from the Netherlands arrived in a bad state due to the Atlantic crossing, which is why he preferred the North American imports. NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 353, folio 236, Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren uit Suriname, 1774.

41 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 229, Response to the order of the Suriname Company to ban English imports, 19 July 1702.

42 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 21, Minutes board meeting of the Suriname Company, 25 September 1700.

43 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 22, Minutes board meeting of the Suriname Company, January 1703.

44 At the same time a similar issue arose in Essequibo, a colony directly under the Zeeland Chamber of the WIC. The Chamber strictly ordered that there be no trade with New York

and the Suriname Company that came out of this remained in place for about 80 years until the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War stopped most Dutch shipping and the Surinamese were allowed to fit out vessels themselves. In the case of Suriname the size of the plantation-production, the history of the regional connections, and maybe also the inclination of directors from Amsterdam towards unhampered trade broke the initial mercantilism of the charter of 1682.

In the final published version of the law on English shipping to Suriname in 1704, the concern with maintaining control over who shipped what is clearly shown in the level of detail with which the directors described what could and could not be shipped. It stated that the inhabitants of Suriname were allowed to trade with skippers from New England, New Netherland (sic) as well as neighboring islands. The final order read that “The alien ships shall not be allowed to bring European manufactures of gold, silver, copper, steel, wool, silk or linen, nor wheat, rye, barley and oats nor meat, or East Indian goods or spices” or “slaves.” Ships sailing from the colony for North America could not carry any sugar, but they were allowed to have “molasses, dram [rum], timber and any and all wares shipped to Suriname from the Republic.” With this regulation the directors sought to prevent European and East Indian wares from being shipped to the colony via non-Dutch intermediaries and to bar them from taking on direct shipping between Europe and Suriname. As further discouragement, the Company levied a 5 percent tariff on both foreign imports and exports – double the amount of the duty on goods shipped to the Republic. For cattle, horses and sheep an extra fee was compulsory.⁴⁵ The bylaw was translated and published in the *Boston Newsletter* the following year.⁴⁶

and Barbados, except in case of great need. They added that this pretext was being used far too lightly. NL-HaNA, 1.05.01.02, NWIC, inv. no. 812, *Letter from the WIC chamber Zeeland to Commander Beekman of Essequibo*, Middelburg 12 March 1704.

45 Bylaw 221, 25 April 1704, *Plakaatboek*, 253–255.

46 “That from henceforth in the colony of Suranam, foreign vessels shall be suffered and admitted with horses from New England...and that the masters of such vessels for themselves and their ships and lading have liberty to trade with the inhabitants as they shall think meet observing and regulating themselves according to the laws and statutes of the country and usage of the place, namely that said foreign ships may not bring in or import any European manufacturies of gold, silver, copper, steel, woolens, silk or linens nor any [European] wheat, rye, barley, oats or beef. And, lastly that the aforesaid ship shall not land on board for transportation any sugar and the aforesaid vessel many only take or carry from hence molasses, Suranam brandy, saw’d wood, as beams, planks and heading and all other wares and merchandize brought from the United Netherlands to Suranam.” *Boston Newsletter*, 4 September 1705, cited in Joseph Avitable, *The Atlantic World Economy and Colonial Connecticut* (unpublished PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2009), 159.

Even though the issue seemed to be resolved, there still was the request to allow Surinamese ships to trade regionally. Around 1716 a pamphlet was published in the Dutch Republic by a “group of interested parties,” led by former principal accountant of the colony Jan van der Marsche. The petitioners were concerned about the supply of slaves, military defense, and free trade from the colony. In their pamphlet they complained that all the other Caribbean colonies (they used Barbados as example) prospered thanks to the freedom granted to them by their motherland. They claimed that the Surinamese planters and traders had to watch how their *syroop* (molasses) was rotting away because they were restricted in their trade within the Caribbean and with North America.⁴⁷ They demanded further freedoms for the regional trade; the central issue being that the planters wanted to be able to trade locally themselves instead of having to wait for the English to come and pick up the molasses. It was argued that regional trade by the Dutch would also increase the number of local ships and able-bodied seamen in port to strengthen the colony’s defenses in case of an attack. They proposed to start a symbiotic relation with Curaçao to get “Salt, flint, and limestone.” In case the English supply of horses would be stopped, the colonists would be able to get their horses from Portuguese Brazil, Essequibo, or from the Orinoco. The *lastgeld* (tax on shipping tonnage) and import tax would still come to the Suriname Company, and the growth of the colony would increase shipping, production and consumption in the colony for the benefit of the Republic.⁴⁸ Their suggestions had much in common with the position taken by the North American colonists who were demanding freedom in trade between their colonies and the other colonies in the Americas. These protests turned out to be in vain. The regulation that had been issued in 1703 and adopted in Suriname in 1704 remained the official compromise between the interests of the colonists and the power of the Company.

Credit and Shipping

While the directors of the Suriname Company failed to prevent non-Dutch shipping to and from Suriname, the changes in the credit system did for a time successfully promote Dutch shipping at the expense of the New Englanders. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Suriname was no longer a precarious

47 NL-HaNA, 1.05.03, SvS, inv. no. 125, *Request of J. van der Marsche and other interested parties to regulate the supply of slaves to, the defence of, and the free trade on the colony of Suriname*, 1 April 1716.

48 Ibid.

colony in a tropical borderland, but it had consolidated both inland as well as in terms of its shipping connections. The non-Dutch trade, the bilateral freighting between the Republic and Suriname as well as the slave trade became more dependable in the decades following the War of the Spanish Succession. In this period the Surinamese plantation economy also began to grow quickly.⁴⁹ This growth depended on the forced labor of enslaved Africans who were shipped across the Atlantic by Dutch slave traders. The buying of an enslaved laborer was a transaction involving a complicated transatlantic credit system. When the slave trade was still the monopoly of the WIC the system was still relatively clear: when buying a slave a plantation manager would either pay in kind, or enter into debt with the company. The WIC had an arrangement whereby the plantation owners could pay for the enslaved in three installments. The WIC therefore carried much of the debt of the Surinamese plantation owners.⁵⁰ The WIC carried this debt as part of the expenses to support the Dutch activities in the Atlantic, and the WIC's obligation to deliver "sufficient" numbers of enslaved laborers to Suriname.

When the slave trade was liberalized and free market slave traders began to supply Suriname with captive workers this system changed. The demand for privately financed credit increased as private slave traders were more anxious about getting paid for their expensive slaving voyages than the WIC had been. After roughly ten years of free slave trading during the 1740s, the debts of the plantation owners had risen so excessively that the system was in danger of grinding to a halt.⁵¹ To revive the slave trade and the plantation economy an Amsterdam banker devised a credit scheme whereby investment funds, called *negotiatie*, would bundle capital from multiple investors and extend loans to various plantations. Without going into the obvious problems with such a system and the inevitable bubble and subsequent collapse that followed, it suffices to sketch the timeline of that development. In 1753 the first *negotiatie* was founded which bought up debt from planters with capital invested primarily by the Amsterdam banker Gideon Deutz. In 1765 the investments increased rapidly, until in 1769 there was far more credit than there were possibilities to invest, resulting in overinvestment into unprofitable plantations. In 1773 the bubble burst and investors came to reconsider the inflated expectations of plantation-based profits. Despite the ensuing caution by investors, investment

49 Alex van Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast: rooibouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie, 1750–1863* (Leiden: KITLV, 1993), 429–432.

50 Jan Jacob Hartsinck, *Beschryving van Guiana, of de Wildekust in Zuid-America*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Gerrit Tielenburg, 1770), 628; Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 179–180.

51 Voort, *De Westindische plantages*, 83–89.

continued well into the 1770s, but stopped in 1780s.⁵² Over the period roughly 36 million Dutch guilders had been invested in Suriname.⁵³

Despite the bad reputation of the credit system as being the cause for the decline in plantation profits, it did result in a massive expansion of the plantation system and it influenced the business model by which plantations were run. When we follow the trends in shipping in Figure 2.1 the result of the *negotiatie* on Dutch and non-Dutch shipping is clear. For the first time since the 1690s, the late 1750s until the end of the 1760s is the first period in which the number of Dutch ships in Paramaribo is greater than non-Dutch ships. This continues in the second half of the 1770s until the outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. The reason for the relative increase in Dutch shipping compared to non-Dutch shipping is the *negotiatie* investment system. The funds had a major influence on the supply-lines the plantation managers could use to acquire provisions. The investment fund director extended credit on the basis of the tropical products that the plantation managers would send across the Atlantic to the Dutch Republic. But in the organization of the funds these directors also demanded to supply the provisions to the plantations (taking a handsome commission). To ensure that the plantation managers followed the instructions of the investment funds so-called *agendarissen* were placed in Paramaribo, controlling the individual plantations within their fund, greatly diminishing the autonomy of plantation managers to organize their business. While the molasses trade certainly continued during this period, it is evident from the shipping figures that Dutch shipping to and from the colony increased.

The relatively high level of Dutch compared to non-Dutch shipping came to a definite end around the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War. By then the *negotiaties* no longer expanded at any great rate, many plantations had gone bankrupt, and their management centralized into the hands of several large funds. The outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War not only coincided with the fizzling out of new investments by the *negotiaties*, it also impeded the Dutch control of the seas as discussed by Oostindie elsewhere in this volume. At the same time the star of the newly independent United States was rising and the Americans were quickly expanding their navy and merchant fleet, both in the Atlantic as well as the Mediterranean, Pacific and Indian Ocean. While Dutch shipping and export did revive after the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, the New England ports had taken the position as freighters in the Atlantic world. They no longer just serviced the connection between North America and Suriname, they had

52 Alex van Stipriaan, "Debunking Debts, Image and Reality of a Colonial Crisis: Suriname at the End of the 18th Century," *Itinerario* 19, no. 1 (1995): 69–84.

53 Voort, *De Westindische Plantages*, 265.

also started to ship sugar between Suriname and Amsterdam, and in the 1790s became the colony's most important supplier of enslaved Africans.⁵⁴

Conclusion

Non-Dutch shipping was a constant and elastic factor in the colonization of Suriname. The small vessels of the North Americans quickly adapted to the changes in the market conditions. While the Dutch had been renowned for operating in intercolonial and interimperial circuits in much of the seventeenth century, non-Dutch shipping clearly became instrumental to the colonization of Suriname in the late seventeenth century. It increased in importance after the founding of the Suriname Company in 1683 and defied the mercantilist restrictions that this company imposed. It remained an important factor throughout the expansion of Suriname's plantation system. During the period of the *negotiatie* funds from the mid-1750s to late 1770s Dutch shipping was boosted, but non-Dutch shipping quickly increased to meet the demands of the colony once Dutch shipping collapsed in the wake of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War.

The issue of regional exchange came up almost immediately after the Zeelanders had taken over the colony in 1667. The response of Abraham Crijnssen, who had captured the colony for the Dutch, was to block non-Dutch shipping to and from Suriname. However, lack of food and supplies made successive governors more benevolent when it came to non-Dutch shipping with English colonies. The Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672–1674) cut the connections short, but these were resumed quickly after hostilities ceased and the Surinamese colonists were in great need of provisions. In the following decades the network of regional trade went through a major transformation. The contact between Suriname and its former colonizer Barbados (with which it had maintained a symbiotic relationship for many decades) was fading away and was being replaced by trade more fitting to the changing nature of the colony. Surinamese plantations were producing molasses as a byproduct, and were limiting wood production. The initial mutual exchange between the two colonies came under pressure now that there was a competition between the two, both with regard to the sales of molasses, as well as the buying up of North American provisions. With the end of Zeelandic rule in 1682, the Suriname Company again tried to ban the non-Dutch trade to and from Suriname with a very restrictive article in its charter. The Suriname Company, however, failed to do so and a more lenient bylaw was passed in 1704.

54 Postma, "Suriname and Its Atlantic Connections," 287–322.

While the charter had been insufficient to restrict non-Dutch trading, a change in the credit system did impact the shipping patterns between Suriname and the Atlantic world. The only time when Dutch shipping began to regain terrain from the non-Dutch New Englanders was at a time when gross overinvestment from the Dutch Republic flooded Suriname and created restrictions on who could supply the plantation with provisions. The managers of the investment funds extended credit on the precondition that they would not only receive a plantation's products, but also exclusive rights to sell the plantation the provisions it needed. In the end the credit system collapsed during the 1770s. When at the beginning of the 1780s Dutch shipping entered troubled waters during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, New Englanders quickly took much of the shipping to and from the colony.

The production of sugar, coffee, cacao and other tropical products on Surinamese plantations for the European market relied on land, labor, capital and military protection. Capital came in the form of Dutch investment, labor through the enslavement of Africans and land primarily through the conquest and subsequent defense of Suriname by Dutch armed forces. However this chapter has shown that regional, intercolonial and often interimperial supply lines were fundamental to sustain colonization efforts in Suriname. Despite their reputation, the Dutch conceded their position as successful middlemen in the later decades of the seventeenth century to captains and merchants based in non-Dutch colonies. During the eighteenth century the New Englanders were able to provide provisions at competitive prices to the plantation managers in Suriname, while the Dutch focused on the transatlantic shipping of tropical products. Dutch shipping did increase its relative importance to the colony in the 1760s and 1770s, but only based on a phenomenal investment of Dutch capital. Once Dutch power at sea was severely challenged by the British, New England captains decidedly took over Suriname's shipping connections in the 1790s.