CHAPTER 3

To These Lands and to Nowhere Else?

While Suriname was colonized using resources mobilized from across formal imperial boundaries, in Amsterdam the directors of the Suriname Company decided that only people from the Dutch republic, and preferably Amsterdam, should profit from the colonial project. The Suriname Company attempted to enforce mercantilist restrictions in Suriname but was forced to change its tune and accept non-Dutch shipping to the colony. Relying on regional interemp- rial supply lines was simply too convenient for the colonists. The economy that developed in Suriname transitioned from one based on exchange with the Amerindians to one based on plantation production. This plantation economy depended in part on regional supply lines; in turn wood and later molasses were supplied by Suriname to merchants in both Caribbean and North American colonies. Over time the umbilical cord between Suriname and Barbados was cut, and a more stable trade with North America was developed. This trade was very successful in evading the restrictions issued in the 1730s from London. The incipient economic connections between Suriname and the Atlantic beyond the metropolitan connection were not unique to the colony but – as this chapter will show – tied in with an integrat ing Atlantic world.

When the States of Zeeland ruled the colony from 1667 to 1682, they could pretty much ignore the rules of the WIC for governing the colony. The dominion of the colony was a source of contention between the WIC and the States of Zeeland. According to the charter granted to the WIC, it was entitled to rule Suriname. However, the States of Zeeland argued that since they invested heavily in conquering the colony, they had the right to govern it. The WIC protested but did not pursue the issue. The States of Zeeland were, however, obliged to abide by the WIC’s rules regarding the slave trade over which it still held exclusive rights. The primacy of Zeeland rather than the WIC gave the colonists some space to manoeuver with respect to regional trade. Nevertheless, when the issue of regional shipping was brought to the attention of the Zeelandic officials in the colony, the instinctive reaction by Crijnssen was to block non-Dutch shipping to and from Suriname. Lack of resources made

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1 Some data and arguments in this chapter have previously been published as Karwan Fatah-Black, ‘Paramaribo as Dutch and Atlantic Nodal Point, 1640–1795’ in Gert Oostindie and Jessica Roitman, Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680–1800 (Brill, 2014), 52–71.
successive governors more tolerant when it came to non-Dutch shipping and trade with merchants and governors in the English colonies. The Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672–1674) interrupted these connections, but they were resumed quickly after hostilities ceased and the Surinamese colonists were in great need of provisions. The networks of the colony’s Jews appear to have been instrumental in making and continuing this regional interconnection across imperial boundaries. But with the end of Zeelandic rule, the Suriname Company tried to ban the non-Dutch trade to and from Suriname again.

When in 1668 the English planters that had remained in Suriname requested from the Zeelander the right to continue trading with Barbados, Crijnssen temporized between appeasing the English and limiting the trade. For Barbados the supplies of Surinamese wood were crucial because years of sugar cultivation had emptied 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.”

Crijnssen wanted to showcase the Dutch as good “allies and neighbors” and allowed the wood shipments to take place in exchange for Barbadian sugar but only on Dutch vessels. About further trade he wrote that he “could not allow the trading from Barbados.” On the other side, Dutch vessels found themselves blocked from the Barbados trade. Ships from Zeeland refused to take cargo to Barbados after two of them – with Crijnssen’s consent – went to Barbados and were confiscated there for breaking English navigation laws.

The migration of Jews to Suriname from Barbados and, after Zeeland’s takeover in the 1660s, from Suriname to Barbados created ties between the two colonies beyond the control of the Zeelander. While the Zeelander were uneasy with this network, they saw its potential advantages. In February 1670 Governor Philip Julius Lichtenberg (1637–78) wrote that Luis 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. This bold move by Dias worked, and Lichtenberg asked Isack de Mesa to write Dias “if those from Barbados would bring sugar or similar wares here, and those from Barbados would allow the Dutch ships

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2 Request by Major Bannister and the English inhabitants to Commander Crijnssen, July 1668, Plakaatboek, 13–15.
3 “conne ’t nogotieren van Barbados niet toestaan.” Answer by Commander Crijnssen to the request by major Bannister Ibid., 15–17.
4 The case of the captains Simon Aertsen and Jacob de Kleijne, 1668–69 Zeeuwse archievia uit Suriname en omliggende kwartieren, 1667–1683, ZA entry 2035 inv.nr. 140–146.