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Suriname and the Atlantic World, 1650-1800

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1. The Wild Coast as marchland: Suriname before 1683

This chapter will show that from the very beginning the colonisation of Suriname was relying on intercolonial connections that helped to supply it with experienced colonists and provisions. The economy that developed there transitioned from one based on exchange with the Amerindians to one based on plantation production. This plantation economy relied 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. This incipient economic integration of Suriname into the Atlantic beyond the metropolitan connection was not unique to the colony, but – as this chapter will show – tied in with an integrating Atlantic world.

Bernard Bailyn characterised the initial phase of Atlantic history as the creation of a “vast new marchland of European civilization.” This space was “an ill-defined, irregular, outer borderland, thrust into the world of indigenous peoples in the Western Hemisphere.” This marchland was contested, and life within it was “literally, barbarous.”⁷⁴ This barbarism was not indigenous to the Americas, but was a result of the arrival of Europeans from overseas. On the Wild Coast European powers fought amongst each other. They did not hesitate to use the conflicts amongst the inland Caribs and Arowaks to attack competing European settlements. Also without inter-European competition there was a reason to instigate violence. If peace arose the “Caribs, who are used to be at war with the Arowaks, could convene with the other and agree to attack our people.”⁷⁵ Who belonged to which side in these conflicts was not always clear, making fear and suspicion universal. Because so many places changed hands so frequently, the Guianas have a special place in Bailyn’s concept of Atlantic marchland: “It was a scene of devastation: squalid settlements, abandoned shelters, burnt-out forts, and ragged survivors of jungle raids and small battles seeking some kind of security.”⁷⁶ But once the dust settled over this contested borderland a new society had been created. This new society was hardly connected to the indigenous people; those who had been settled along the Suriname River, the Commewijne River and their tributaries had retreated inland. Instead, slave-based plantation production had become the single most important economic activity.

⁷⁴ Bailyn, *Atlantic History*, 62–63.

⁷⁵ “*dat de Caribisen, die gewent zijn althijts tegens d' Arrowacken t' oorloghen, metten anderen soudén beraetslaeght hebben om ons volck op 't lijf te vallen.*” Letter from Governor Johan Heinsius, 28-Dec-1678. *Zeeuwse archivalia uit Suriname en omliggende kwartieren, 1667 - 1683* (Paramaribo: Surinaams Museum 2003).

⁷⁶ Bailyn, *Atlantic History*, 69.

A periodization in which the contested borderland is chronologically followed by a production phase does not fit Suriname's history neatly, although the trend can be distinguished. In the second half of the seventeenth century the colony moved back and forth between being a contested borderland and becoming a stable plantation colony. The English period of the colony (1651-1667) was characterised by growing numbers of enslaved Africans, sugar mills and the arrival of experienced colonists from Barbados and several other colonies, until a large-scale epidemic broke out in 1665. The relations with the Amerindians were mostly peaceful, and the colonists only relied on them for locally oriented trade in provisions or enslaved people. The colony's capital was the poorly defended inland town of Torarica. After the Zeelanders took over the colony in 1667 its success continued until about 1672. After that year the number of enslaved Africans disembarked in the colony declined. Experienced planters started leaving, and migrants to the colony were mostly inexperienced Europeans. There was no clear decision on where the seat of government would be. It changed several times back and forth between Torarica and Paramaribo. The connection with nearby colonies, particularly Barbados, faltered in the Zeelandic period. This isolation came despite efforts by Jewish colonists who tried to continue the exchange with the islands from which they had arrived in Suriname. The Zeelanders chose to ignore the monopoly on the slave trade, undercutting the business of the WIC. Within a few years the relations with the Amerindians became decidedly worse, culminating in a guerrilla war between 1676 and 1686 which destroyed many plantations, mostly along the Para creek, but also upstream the Suriname River. Shipping to Zeeland became increasingly unsuccessful, with ships having ever more trouble to fill their hold.

The transition of the colony into the hands of the Suriname Company in 1683 reversed this trend. Peace was made with the Amerindians by banning their enslavement and stopping commodity trade by Europeans. Because of the founding of the Suriname Company in 1683 the WIC regained confidence to invest in the colony. The directors of the WIC were motivated to pick up slave-trading again, which in turn resulted in the growth of the number of plantations in Suriname. The founding of the SC also meant that the regional trade from Suriname to nearby colonies was made illegal, although it continued in a rather stable way. The colony's defences were strengthened, both inland and on the coast, and groups of migrants started to arrive from all over Europe. The return to plantation production under the rule of the Suriname Company depended largely on planters who had been in the colony before. This illustrates the continuity in Suriname's colonisation that stretches back to the English period, or even further to Dutch Brazil.

The initial Dutch colonisation in Guiana was motivated by the idea that the creation of sugar plantation colonies modelled after Brazil and the expansion of inland trade with the Amerindians would be profitable. The Brazilian experience was central to the plans to create permanent settlements on the Guiana Coast and can be found in the propaganda material published by the proponents of colonisation in the Guianas.⁷⁷ For much of the seventeenth century the Suriname River was just one of many on the Guiana Coast. These rivers were like flypaper with plantations stuck to the sides. In the seventeenth century the rivers on the Guiana Coast provided routes inland to trade with Amerindians. On their banks *factorijen* (trading posts), or attempts at *volkplanting* (settlement) could be found. The rivers that saw successful European settlement on their banks named the colonies, while the rivers where settlement failed or had not yet been attempted became borders between those colonies. The shift from Suriname as a river where Europeans came to trade, to Suriname as a settlement and plantation colony took place somewhere during the English rule between 1651 and 1667. After the Zeelandic take-over of the colony between 1667 and 1682, trading with the indigenous returned as an important activity. After the colony became the property of the Suriname Company (1683), and the inland war ended (1686), the trade with the indigenous inhabitants – which had never been very voluminous – completely disappeared and was replaced by an exclusive orientation on production as had been the case in the English period.

1.1. Two tracks of the Dutch in the Atlantic

The Dutch vision of colonizing and building plantations rather than trading on the Wild Coast can be traced back to the foundation of the Dutch West-India Company (WIC). Willem Usselinx (1567-1647), an Antwerp-born merchant who settled in Middelburg (the capital of Zeeland), tried to influence the charter that was being drawn up for the WIC by the States General of the Dutch Republic. In his vision of Atlantic colonisation, the Calvinist states would provide many willing colonists who would create colonies to furnish the motherland with raw materials. In perfect symbiosis these colonies would in turn be a new market for products from the Republic. Overseas production would infringe on the power of the Spanish King who at the time still dominated the West Indian trade. Usselinx reasoned that

⁷⁷ Keye, *Beschryvinge*; Alphen, *Jan Reeps*; On the attempts by Johannes Apricius see Kim Isolde Muller, ed., *Elisabeth van der Woude, Memorije van 't geen bij mijn tijt is voorgevallen: met het opzienbarende verslag van haar reis naar de Wilde Kust, 1676-1677* (Amsterdam: Terra Incognita, 2001).

“if we plant in the West Indies the vine, oil and orange trees with sugar cane etc. we shall not only supply our beloved Netherlands, but also other provinces and empires with the beautiful blessings and the divine fruits of that West Indian Canaan, to the great disruption of the Spanish traffics, out of which shall follow the dark eclipse of the King’s treasures.”⁷⁸

The Guianas were according to Usselinx an excellent area for such a venture since they were largely untouched by the Iberians, and also a good place to build a power base. Despite his many efforts, Usselinx’ lobby from Zeeland to support a colonising vision for the WIC, rather than the single-minded focus on trade failed. Merchants from Holland had a different idea about what could be done in the Atlantic, and they were better positioned to convince the States General. In the States General cities of Holland supported a plan that did not focus on agricultural colonisation, but rather emphasized the need for trade and shipping. The plan from Holland came to form the basis of the WIC charter. Usselinx left the Republic in disappointment and tried to found a West-India Company in Sweden, which also failed to come to fruition.⁷⁹

Given this history it is somewhat ironic that by the end of the seventeenth century merchants from Holland had created the most successful sugar producing colony on the Wild Coast while the Zeelandic efforts to do so had failed. During the seventeenth century it was actually the merchants from Zeeland who were the most active on the Wild Coast, trading with the Amerindians in the region, rather than founding plantation colonies. After the founding of the West India Company the Atlantic was formally under the charter of the WIC. The federated nature of the Dutch Republic was carried over into the organisational structure of the WIC, which was divided in five chambers. These chambers continued the regional specialisations of the different cities or provinces. Zeelandic interest in the Wild Coast dated from the late sixteenth century and was carried over into the Zeelandic chamber of the WIC. The Amsterdam chamber of the WIC on the other hand specialized in the connection to New Netherlands on the North American east coast.

This customary division between the chambers was not made official but carried a lot of weight. When in 1635 an Amsterdam colonization expedition was sent to the Wild Coast it was seen as an infringement on Zeelandic consuetude, and the Zeelanders rejoiced in the colony’s early demise.⁸⁰ In 1667 the States of Zeeland claimed Suriname for

⁷⁸ Willem Usselinx, *Anderde discours. By forma van messieve. Daer in kortelijck ende grondich verthoondt wort, de nootwendicheyt der Oost ende West Indische navigatie*, 1622.

⁷⁹ Heijer, *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, 22–28.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 88–92.

themselves when they took it from the English. While it clearly lay inside the area of the world chartered to the WIC, the states argued that it was their fleet which had captured the colony, and that they could therefore control it. During Zeeland's rule of Suriname, the rivalry with Amsterdam continued. When Zeeland appeared to be unable to maintain the colony at a profitable rate, the city of Amsterdam and the family Aerssen van Sommelsdyck were willing to found the Suriname Company to share the costs and benefits of the colony together with the WIC.

Dutch colonisation of the Wild Coast was heavily marked by the demise of Dutch Brazil. The founding of Brazil was part of a grand design to hit the Iberians, begin plantation production in the tropics and simultaneously gain access to the slave trade. In Brazil the Dutch learned the skill of enslaving Africans, growing sugar and dealing with colonial populations. That last lesson was learned the hard way. The uprising by the Portuguese against the Dutch colonial government started in 1645 and ended with the defeat of the Dutch in 1654. The argument that the Dutch should once again hold colonies in tropical climates reverberated in many discussions on Atlantic expansion, and was a returning theme in pamphlets in the second half of the seventeenth century.⁸¹

The fallout of the loss of Brazil to the Wild Coast was twofold. The first effect of the loss of Brazil was that it set the Dutch off on two tracks into the Atlantic world. One being the slave trade, carried out mainly through Curaçao and supplying the Spanish colonies in the Americas. The second, which is of more importance here, was the onset of the search for new areas where they could found plantation colonies and create a "new Brazil." While there were some Zeelandic lobbyists arguing for the reconquest of Brazil, the idea that the Dutch needed to lay their hands on a colony elsewhere in a tropical climate where they could grow sugar, gained force. In total fifteen expeditions were fitted out to settle on the Wild Coast to attempt colonisation. Most of these attempts were only short-lived.⁸² The tropical climate, combined with French and English rivalry made it difficult to settle permanently. When the French took Cayenne (1664) and the English Essequibo (1666), the Zeeland chamber of the admiralty responded by outfitting an expeditionary force that was to destroy the power of the English from the Wild Coast to Virginia. Retaking Cayenne after 1664 was impossible since the French had become allies against the English. Admiral Abraham Crijnssen was ordered to take Suriname, an English colony at the time. While he was ordered to destroy the other places, Suriname was to

⁸¹ Keye, *Het waere onderscheyt*.

⁸² Henk den Heijer, "'Over warme en koude landen': Mislukte Nederlandse volksplantingen op de Wilde Kust in de zeventiende eeuw," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 21, no. 1 (2005): 79–90.

befall him unscathed. The colony was becoming a promising sugar plantation in English hands.⁸³ While starting a colony had proved to be difficult, taking one by force might have been considered a way to skip the difficult early build-up phase.

The second effect of the loss of Brazil in 1654 was that it created a network of people who carried the Brazilian experience into the Atlantic. The Portuguese were exercising their heavy handed anti-Semitism in areas conquered from the Dutch, motivating Jewish planters to quickly move out of the colony. Many of them went to non-Iberian colonies on the Wild Coast and in the Caribbean, sometimes indirectly. The Navarro family is an example of this. Wim Klooster traced the scions of this family from their flight from the inquisition in Portugal in the sixteenth century. From Portugal they moved to Amsterdam, from there to Dutch Brazil. After the fall of Brazil they moved back to Amsterdam, and from there to Curaçao, English Suriname, and again, onward to Barbados. Such and similar routes were not uncommon, making many Wild Coast colonisers veterans from Brazil.⁸⁴ The English colonisation of Suriname (1651-1667) also caused the influx of a sizeable group of Portuguese (or rather post-Brazilian) Jews from Barbados. On Barbados Jews were restricted in the amount of slaves they could own, and had to live in the city.⁸⁵ In Suriname however, they were free to settle in their own village upstream the Suriname River and brought sugar planting technologies with them.⁸⁶

This group of Jews cannot have been very large. David Cohen Nassy, a veteran from Brazil had in that same period been allotted some land in Cayenne, but quickly ran into trouble with the local leader of the Dutch settlement there. Their colonisation of Cayenne did not survive the French invasion of 1664, which moved them to Suriname and partly to Essequibo only to be replaced again by the English invasion of that colony in 1666. Together with Jews settled at the Pomeroon River they moved to join their co-religionists in their settlement upstream the Suriname River in 1666.

⁸³ J. C. M. Warnsinck and Abraham Westhuysen, *Abraham Crijnsen, de verovering van Suriname en zijn aanslag op Virginië in 1667*, (Amsterdam: N.v. Noord-hollandsche uitgeversmaatschappij, 1936).

⁸⁴ Wim Klooster, "Networks of Colonial Entrepreneurs: The Founders of the Jewish Settlements in Dutch America, 1650s and 1660s," in *Atlantic Diasporas: Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews in the Age of Mercantilism*, ed. Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 33–49.

⁸⁵ Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, 142.

⁸⁶ Robert Cohen, *Jews in Another Environment, Surinam in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century*, Brill's Series in Jewish Studies (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

Together these groups formed a population of approximately 200 Jewish colonists at the time.⁸⁷

These colonists first settled in Torarica, but soon Suriname was also attacked and invaded, this time by the fleet of Abraham Crijnsen, prompting many, among whom Jews, to leave for English islands in the Caribbean. Swept from the various colonies over a period of more than thirty years, groups of Jews from Brazil had arrived, left and returned to Suriname. In 1682 Samuel Nassy received the grant to found a Synagogue in what would be called Jodensavanne.⁸⁸ This synagogue became the centre of a village close to which many Jews successfully built numerous sugar plantations, strongly based on the Brazilian example.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Rens estimates “1. Up to 1664.5 maximally 30 persons. 2. In 1665 or 1666 an addition of maximally 100 from Cayenne. 3. A hypothetical further addition of maximally 50 from Essequibo and Pomeroon.” L. L. E. Rens, “Analysis of Annals Relating to Early Jewish Settlement in Surinam,” in *The Jewish Nation in Surinam*, ed. R. Cohen (Emmering, 1982), 29–45.

⁸⁸ Wieke Vink, “Creole Jews. Negotiating Community in Colonial Suriname” (Phd thesis, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 2008), 24–25.

⁸⁹ R.A.J. van Lier, “The Jewish Community in Surinam: a Historical Survey,” in *The Jewish Nation in Surinam*, ed. R. Cohen (Amsterdam: Emmering, 1982), 19–28.

1.2. Sugar plantations and trade

The main push for plantation activities in Suriname was initiated by the English colonisation from Barbados by Lord Willoughby of Parham in 1651. In 1650 Willoughby was the new Governor of Barbados and was looking to extend his and his King's power. Some have argued that the colony of Suriname was found to alleviate internal disputes in the mother colony.⁹⁰

When Willoughby had to defend his actions in 1656 he argued:

“That Serranam may be considered as a place which by its scituation and other advantages may bee more searviceable to your Highnesse by being preserved and forborne then by being drayned & displanted at this time, it being a groweing plantation and soe happily scituated, that from thence a strength may bee easily conveyed into the bowells of the Spaniard at Peru.”

It was a line of reasoning very similar to that of Usselinx: successful plantations and a stronghold against the Spanish crown. But for Willoughby it was also a project of personal prestige overseas, the expansion of which was to be left a possibility. The borders of the colony were never defined by Willoughby, who argued that “Hee is at Libertie to begin another Settlement, continues to the bounds of the former”, but stressing at the same time that it is naturally “bounded by the two Rivers of Marrawine and Sarramica.”⁹¹ While this literally made the colony “an ill-defined borderland”, to quote Bailyn again, the activities of the colonists were more akin to the production phase of Atlantic expansion because of the many sugar plantations that the colonists started.

There seems to have been little orientation on inland trade or conflict by the English planters, but rather an attempt to follow up on the success of Barbados. The lack of orientation on the relation to the Amerindians is clearly illustrated by the fact that the fortress that the colonists built was Fort Willoughby at the mouth of the Suriname River, while the colony's main town Torarica was deep inland without any special defences. George Warren saw plantations as the centre of activity in the colony: “of *sugar* very considerable quantities are made ... *Specklewood* is also plentiful.”⁹² For both these products Warren cites the plantations as their source. Inland trade

⁹⁰ Sarah Barber, “Power in the English Caribbean: The Proprietorship of Lord Willoughby of Parham,” in *Constructing Early Modern Empires*, ed. L. H. Roper and Bertrand van Ruymbeke, The Atlantic World (Leiden Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2007), 189–212.

⁹¹ Lord Willoughby, “Reasons offered by Lord Willoughbie why hee ought not to be confined in his settlement upon Serranam”, in Vincent T. Harlow, ed., *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623-1667*, vol. 56, Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1925).

⁹² Warren, *An Impartial Description*.

with the Amerindians is mentioned in passing, and only in the sense of trading provisions or enslaved people. There is no mention of export products for European markets. The English map of Suriname at the time shows the colony's rivers and the plantations with sugar mills. The indigenous settlements are scarcely mentioned. There are a few indicated on the Commewijne, but none at all on the Suriname and its tributaries.⁹³ Warren writes that the Amerindians “smarted for their folly [of attacking the colony]: now the Coloney is grown potent and they dare not but be humble.”⁹⁴

[Figure 4]

Figure 3 English manuscript map of Suriname, 1667.
A Discription of the Coleny of Surranam, John Carter Brown Archive of Early American Images.

When the Zeelanders took over Suriname in 1667 there was a return to inland trade for more than just daily necessities. According to Lodewijk

⁹³ “A Discription of the Coleny of Surranam in Guiana Drawne in the Yeare 1667”, 1667, JCB Archive of Early American Images, Cabinet Gm667 Di Ms.

⁹⁴ Warren, *An Impartial Description*, 26.

Hulsman trade with the indigenous people, mainly in hardwoods, remained central to the activities of the colonists in Suriname until the 1680s.⁹⁵ At the time planting and trading were not completely separate endeavours. A company of four men which started in Amsterdam in 1674 made the plan to sail to the Wild Coast where they would buy numerous goods from plantations as well as from Amerindians. All goods were then collected by the correspondents of the participants in Suriname, before being sent across to Europe.⁹⁶ This mid-way between inland trade and trade in plantation products was not uncommon at the time. During his travels to Berbice, a colony initially run from Zeeland, Adriaan van Berkel witnessed the trade with the indigenous people first hand, but was also trading goods at the plantations. In Suriname the so-called *bokkenruylders* were independent travelling merchants going into the hinterland to trade goods with the Amerindians. *Bokken* (like buck in English) was a generic and negative term for all Amerindians, regardless of tribe. According to Hulsman the use of this generic term, instead of the previously more common way to call people by their tribe, signified a growing polarization between the colonists and the Amerindians.⁹⁷

Governor Heinsius blamed the outbreak of the inland war in the late 1670s on these *bokkenruylders*. Heinsius stressed in his letters how starting plantations could turn the colony around, and he thought of inland trade as a troublesome activity. That view was shared by the later Governor van Sommelsdyck who ended the war with the Amerindians. During his reign the Amerindians were appeased, amongst other things by Sommelsdyck marrying one of the daughters of an Amerindian leader. He also forbade whites to go to “the Amerindian villages to trade.”⁹⁸ The trade returned in the eighteenth century, but never again as an important activity for the colony. The *bokkenruylders* were not the only ones to blame for the hostilities. The English knew that Amerindian attacks could drive the colony off the map, and might have consciously tried to poison inland relations when they lost the colony. When a large group of the English left for Jamaica in 1675, they took some Indians with them, and allegedly spread the

⁹⁵ L.A.H.C. Hulsman, “Nederlands Amazonia: handel met indianen tussen 1580 en 1680” (Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2009), 235, <http://dare.uva.nl/record/316229>.

⁹⁶ The contacts were either the correspondent of Abraham Drago or in case of his absence either Josua or Jacob Nassy. Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Notarial Archive, Notary P. Padthuijsen, entry 2908B act 1438, 30-Oct- 1674. Abraham Drago, Jacob Pruijs, Barent van der Linden en Otto van Halmael, merchants from Amsterdam, start a company to trade on the Wilde Coast.

⁹⁷ Hulsman, “Nederlands Amazonia,” 205.

⁹⁸ Bylaw 127, 15-May-1685 *Plakaatboek*, 156–166.

rumour that these had been sold to them by the Zeelanders. The panicked Governor Pieter Versterre requested the States of Zeeland to plead with the English Majesty “to return the deported Indians back to this coast, or else it will be impossible for our nation to live, and we run the risk of being massacred.”⁹⁹

Another successful strategy on the part of the English to sabotage the colony and drain it of its resources, was by organizing an exodus of colonists.¹⁰⁰ This departure of colonists was slowed down by Zeelandic rules that forced emigrants to pay off their debts and sell their slaves before they could leave.¹⁰¹ Despite the limitation that the Zeelandic proprietors placed on the departure of the colonists and their possessions, many did leave and the population figures as well as the acres of cultivated land declined during the Zeelandic rule of the colony.

Governor Pieter Versterre wrote in 1676 that the ships in the colony “are making slow progress because of the lack of sugar to load. There is not much sugar any more, it is hard to believe how much this colony has been weakened by the departure of the English.”¹⁰² In that same year there was a concerted effort by several Amerindian groups to attack the Zeelandic colony that came to signal the end of the inland trade. While at first the attackers killed white and black alike, later they tried to convince the Africans to desert the white colonists and join the guerrilla. The rollback operations by the Amerindians were successful in destroying all the plantations along the Para creek, and the planters retreated towards fort Zeelandia, on the site of former fort Willoughby. The combined attacks by the marooned slaves and the Amerindians especially near Torarica caused food shortages on the plantations there, which in turn lead to more resistance by those still enslaved.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ “*Sijne Majt. te versoecken, dat de affgevoerde indiaenen weeder aen de kust mogen geleverd worden, off anders sal het onmogelijck weesenom voor onse natie alhier langer te kunnen leven, off wij loopen perijckel van alle gemassacreert te worden.*” Letter by Pieter Versterre, 16-Dec-1675 *Zeeuwse archivalia uit Suriname en omliggende kwartieren, 1667 – 1683*.

¹⁰⁰ Most notably with the Clifford family who organised a sizable exodus, and whose property was confiscated by the Governor. Hartsinck, *Beschryving*, 2:859.

¹⁰¹ Bylaw 30, The rights of the English and the regulations to prevent them from leaving the colony, 15-Nov-1669, *Plakaatboek*, 53-54.

¹⁰² Letter Pieter Versterre, 10-Apr-1676 from *Zeeuwse archivalia uit Suriname en omliggende kwartieren, 1667 - 1683*.

¹⁰³ 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.

[Figure 5]

Figure 4 Detail of the map by Thornton showing both the fort and Torarica, 1667.
A New Draught of Surranam upon the Coast of Guianna, John Carter Brown Library
Cabinet Gm67 ThJ.

The States of Zeeland became eager to get rid of their colony because of all the trouble they had maintaining it. They did want to keep access to its market, but without the burden of its upkeep. They came to an agreement with the WIC that from 7 May 1682 the colony would be in the hands of the WIC, and all costs and income would befall the company. Zeeland's fear of being denied access to the colony by intervention from the States of Holland was considerable. The States of Zeeland demanded to be guaranteed unlimited, free and unimpeded shipping, trade, navigation, and settlement rights in the colony for the "inhabitants, merchants, captains or passengers" from Zeeland. They demanded that they would never be taxed

more than any “inhabitant of Holland or any of the other provinces.” This was of such importance to the States of Zeeland that it was also carried over into the charter for the colony made by the States General in 1682, as well as the contract of the Suriname Company of 1683.

1.3. Surinamburgh

Not only production declined during the rule by the States of Zeeland (1667-1682), the defences were in an equal dire state: “of the forty cannons at the fort, only nine or ten can be used.” The number of soldiers dropped steadily, simply because many were sick and died, but also because they hid themselves as stowaway on outgoing ships. Versterre recounts an incident that when the troops requested to look for soldiers on the outgoing ships they were hindered by the captains to do so. In fact, “when the sergeant tried to look a bit longer, the captain ordered him to make haste, or he would adjust his sails and take him away as well.”¹⁰⁴ The pressure from the attacking Amerindians drove the inhabitants to the recently established hamlet of Paramaribo, and to settle along the Commewijne. The fortress on the shell ridges became the core of the European colony. Governor Heinsius, a new Governor sent to Suriname who was a veteran from Brazil and a proponent of plantation production rather than trade, wrote on his arrival:

“I assure you that it does not look like much at the moment.

However, the land can be brought to great perfection, and could be – according to some of the prominent planters – more profitable than your highnesses have ever been told. They speak of great things, and Paramaribo can be turned into a beautiful city, quite better than Middelburg. However, today it is but a hamlet with some scattered houses. I was unable to find a place to sleep there myself except in some sort of barn” ... “The dwellings people live in are just some palisades covered with hay or leaves.”¹⁰⁵

It was not much better, or arguably worse than the place George Warren had seen in the English period, but at that time the colony had a different capital. Warren saw the fort on the place where Paramaribo would be found, and mentioned “a small Village, call’d the *Fort*.” Upstream however there was “the Metropolis or chief Town of the Colony, called *Toorarica*, consisting of about One hundred Dweling Houses, and a Chappel” (see map). At the time Torarica also functioned as the colony’s

¹⁰⁴ Letter Pieter Versterre, 10-Apr-1676 from *Zeeuwse archivalia uit Suriname en omliggende kwartieren, 1667 - 1683*.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Governor Heinsius to the States of Zeeland, 28-Dec-1678 *Zeeuwse archivalia uit Suriname en omliggende kwartieren, 1667 - 1683*.

harbour, and vessels “of 300 Tons” were able to sail there. The natural bay in front of the town was “large enough to contain a Hundred Sail of Ships.”¹⁰⁶ The place was also referred to as Sande Poynt.¹⁰⁷ When the Zeelanders took over the colony from the English, they alternated the seat of government between Torarica and Paramaribo several times. The war with the Amerindians decidedly drove them to the fort.

There is an echo of Heinsius’ experience in besieged Recife in Brazil when he envisions how the city should be built: “a *borstweringe* with palisades in the shape of a half moon, would completely protect this place against all attacks by the Indians.” Heinsius introduced the name Surinamburgh (also spelled Zerrenamburgh) for the town. This name refers to the word burg or burcht for castle or stronghold, as well as to the name of the Zeelandic city of Middelburg, the capital of the States of Zeeland (the owner of the colony). Paramaribo would always remain an open and unwallled city, although palisades were put up around 1680. Without a wall around the city, the panicked colonists had brought their goods and families either into the fortress, or even aboard ships. But Heinsius remained an optimist, and when the place would be “made into a city with a wall, it would certainly be a strong burght, and a refuge for the entire colony.”¹⁰⁸

That Surinamburgh, despite its name, was a safe stronghold was more wishful thinking than anything else. This is well illustrated by the report made by Heinsius of an incident in 1680:

“At night around eight o’clock the Indians have come to the outer houses of the Princestreet, of which the last two are abandoned. In the third there was a wife and her child, the maid of secretary van Gheluwe. There they stormed in. A Negro named Ganmidt, as well as some others said: ‘you are the reason that Mr. Perduijn has cut my ear, therefor you must die’, after which she received several hits with axes and swords, and was left for dead. In the same house there was another citizen, a shoemaker named Cruithoff, who they found in his hammock. They beat him on his head and stuck an arrow in his chest, the injuries of which killed him an hour later. After this everyone came to arms, and the enemy left without causing further harm.”¹⁰⁹

Abandoned houses, cutting ears, attacking Amerindians and a marooned African, and a village up in arms to drive off the assailants. Clearly not the

¹⁰⁶ Warren, *An Impartial Description*, 1–2.

¹⁰⁷ Letter to Sir Robert Harley from the stewards of his plantation in Surinam (1663-1664) in: Harlow, *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623-1667*.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Heinsius, 1680, *Zeeuwse Archivalia uit Suriname en omliggende kwartieren, 1667 – 1683*.

¹⁰⁹ Idem.

safe haven envisioned by Heinsius, but a vulnerable outpost in contested borderland.

When Adriaan van Berkel went to the colony to work as a plantation manager later in the 1680s, after the end of the inland war, much had changed. He wrote that the colonists:

“have built a stone fortress called Paramaribo, as well as a village of about fifty to sixty houses. Higher up on a tributary of that same river there is a fortification, built during the reign of Governor Sommeldyck. Further upstream on the same river we find *Zandpunt*, a village of Christians, which consists of maybe twenty to thirty houses and a church. Above this village one finds a village called Jewish Quarters, so called because many Jews live there. Here there are the best plantations of the entire colony.”¹¹⁰

The colony van Berkel saw was one rapidly transitioning into one geared towards plantation production.

1.4. Regional connections

Because the States of Zeeland ruled the colony, they did not have to abide by the rules of the WIC for governing the colony. However, they did have to abide by the WIC rules of the slave trade, since this was a WIC monopoly in the Atlantic. This gave the colonists some space to manoeuvre with respect to the regional trade. Nevertheless, when the issue came up shortly after the Zeelanders had taken over the colony, the instinctive reaction by Crijnssen was to block non-Dutch shipping to and from Suriname. Lack of resources made successive Governors more benevolent when it came to non-Dutch shipping with merchants and Governors in the 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. The networks of the colony’s Jews appear to have been instrumental in making and continuing this regional inter-connection across imperial boundaries. But with the end of Zeelandic rule, the SC 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 Zeelanders the right to continue trading with Barbados, Crijnssen 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 “*timmerhoudt* for the rebuilding of the

¹¹⁰ Berkel, *Amerikaansche voyagien*, 109–110.

city.”¹¹¹ Crijnssen wanted to showcase the Dutch as good “allies and neighbours”, and allowed for the wood shipping 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.”¹¹² On the other side Dutch vessels also blocked. 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.¹¹³

The migration of Jews to Suriname from Barbados, and after Zeeland’s take-over in the 1660s from Suriname to Barbados, created ties between the two colonies that were outside of the control of the Zeelanders. While the Zeelanders were uneasy with this network, they saw its potential use. In February 1670 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 would bring sugar or similar wares here, and those from Barbados would allow the Dutch ships and their cargo, that there would be no objections from this side to establish a regular.”¹¹⁴ The Governor argued that this “would be good for Suriname, and time will soon tell if it will work out”¹¹⁵ 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, flour, and fish in exchange for *Kilduijvel* [an inferior type of rum] and [sugar cane] syrup.” Lichtenberg was tempted by the idea and asked Henrico de Casseres to contact his correspondents in his name, to see

¹¹¹ Request by Major Bannister and the English inhabitants to Commander Crijnssen, Jul-1668, *Plakaatboek*, 13–15.

¹¹² “conne ‘t nogotieren van Barbados niet toestaan.” Answer by Commander Crijnssen to the request by major Bannister Ibid., 15–17.

¹¹³ The case of the captains Simon Aertsen and Jacob de Kleijne, 1668-1669 *Zeeuwse archivalia uit Suriname en omliggende kwartieren, 1667 - 1683*, ZA entry 2035 inv.nr. 140–146.

¹¹⁴ “als die van de Barbados suijker of eenige soodanige waren hier brachten, en die van de Barbados wilden toelaten, dat de duijtse schepen ende met laddingh daer komen mochten, dat van dese kant geen swarigheijt soude gemaect worden om alsdan een vaste negotie te stabiliseren.” Ibidem.

¹¹⁵ “een brave saeck voor Surinam soude sijn ende den tijt ons in korte, of het lucken sal, sal leeren.” Ibidem.

if such could be organised because that “would be very important for the sugar mills in Suriname and greatly increase the exchange of goods between both places.”¹¹⁶

Whatever the success of the establishment of the regional trade was, the outbreak of hostilities with England in 1672 during the so-called Dutch Year of Disaster, necessarily hampered trade between Suriname and Barbados or any other English ports for that matter. The lack of inter-colonial and inter-imperial 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 also caused the trans-Atlantic connections to be hampered. The threatening of the long-distance supply lines and warefare with the combined Amerindian and Maroon enemy strengthened the need of the colonists to re-establish a regional connection.

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.¹¹⁷ After the initial re-establishing of contact, Barbados “became Suriname’s most important colonial provider for provisions of all kind”, with private merchants joining in the trade.¹¹⁸ In this regional trade, the colony’s Jews took a prominent place. When in March 1678 the ship *Morgenstarre* with captain Jan van der Spijck was sent to Barbados, David de Fonseca was aboard as factor.¹¹⁹ A year later Samuel Cohen Nassy and Governor Heinsius sent Jan van der Spijck out to Cayenne to bring in supplies.¹²⁰ In 1680 Samuel Nassy wrote in a letter to Governor Heinsius that, while Maroons had to be executed when caught by the whites, this was of course not very profitable. In turn he suggested selling the recaptured Africans to Barbados. The Barbados connection had become a regular one, as seen in the table below.

The intensity of the inter-colonial connections is well illustrated by a two-month sample of ship movements in and out of Suriname in 1680. Noteworthy is also that the Dutch ships failed to fully load with return

¹¹⁶ 8-Feb-1670, *Zeeuwse Archivalia*, ZA, entry 2035 inv.nr. 204–206.

¹¹⁷ Claudia Schnurmann, *Atlantische Welten: Engländer und Niederländer im amerikanisch-atlantischen Raum, 1648 - 1713* (Köln: Böhlau, 1998), 22.

¹¹⁸ Hermann Wellenreuther and Jaap Jacobs, eds., *Jacob Leisler’s Atlantic World in the Later Seventeenth Century* (LIT Verlag Münster, 2009), 46.

¹¹⁹ Letter to John Atkins on Barbados, Mar-1678, *Zeeuwse Archivalia*, ZA, entry 2035 inv.nr. 302–304.

¹²⁰ Declaration by captain Jan van der Spijck, 22-Dec-1679, *Zeeuwse Archivalia*, ZA, entry 2035 inv.nr. 376.

shipments. The ships that came in from New England and Barbados shipped horses and provisions to the colony and sailed out again loaded with timber. Judging by the names of the captains, they did not seem to have been of Portuguese origin themselves, but they did ship for Luso-Hebrew merchants and planters in the Caribbean, the Guianas and the North American East Coast.

Table 3 Ship movements for January and February 1680

Date	Itinerary	Ship's name	Captain's name	Note on cargo
1 Jan.	To the Republic	<i>De Surinaemse Coopman</i>	<i>Tobias Adriaense</i>	Not fully loaded
1 Jan	To the Republic	<i>De Jonge Vogel Fenix</i>	<i>Jan de Bonte</i>	Not fully loaded
2 Jan	From New York,	<i>The Hunter</i>	<i>Paul Crean</i>	9 horses, some food
7-Jan	From Barbados	<i>Kitch Dextford</i>	<i>James Aire</i>	Picking up a planter and his enslaved workers
18 Jan	From Barbados	<i>Bloessem</i>	<i>Richard Martin</i>	Empty, to get timber
20 Jan	From New England	<i>The Trent</i>	<i>George Munjoy</i>	Left Suriname for Barbados in August. Brings 8 horse and food. Entire cargo is for Samuel Nassy
24 Jan	To unknown	<i>Kitch Dextford</i>	<i>James Aire</i>	Out with planter and enslaved workers
26 Jan	To Barbados	<i>The Hunter</i>	<i>Paul Crean</i>	Timber. Failed to sell his horses. Intends to return with food soon
9 Feb	To Barbados	<i>The Trent</i>	<i>Josias Monjoy</i>	Timber, owned by Samuel Nassy, who sent it to bring food back
17 Feb	To the Republic		<i>Gabriel Bisschop</i>	
20 Feb	From Barbados	<i>Hopewell</i>	<i>Francois Gibbon</i>	Empty, consigned by Jews to load timber
20 Feb	From New York	<i>Batty</i>	<i>William Dunscombe</i>	Thirty horses and food
21 Feb	To Barbados	<i>Bloessem</i>	<i>Richard Martin</i>	Timber
26 Feb and leaves 7 Mar	From Fijale, but originates from the Isle of Wight	<i>The George</i>	<i>Wm: Liege</i>	Loaded with wine, failed to sell, and left again.
29 Feb	To Barbados	<i>Anna Maria</i>	<i>George Monjoy</i>	Bought by Samuel Nassy, loaded with timber to return with food

Source: ZA, “extract der daghelijckse gebeurtenisse”, entry 2035 inv.nr. 404-405

Jewish settlers such as Luis Dias and Samuel Nassy played a prominent role in maintaining this connection, Nassy on the Surinamese side, Dias on the Barbadian side.¹²¹ After the capturing of Suriname the Zeelanders 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 could have resulted from the transfer of the colony into the hands of the WIC in 1682 and the SC in 1683, but again the regional connection proved stronger than restrictive measures from the metropolis.

The transition from European activities based on trade with the Amerindians into a stable production system occurred unevenly on an Atlantic scale. For Suriname the marchland period overlapped with attempts to establish slave-based plantation production. A delineation between a Dutch Atlantic economy based on trade, followed by one based on of plantation production as suggested by Jan de Vries that was discussed in the introduction roughly matches Suriname’s colonisation process.¹²² However, it does seem artificial to categorize what happened along the Suriname River as “Dutch”, much of what was going on at the time did not yet depend on Dutch action, rather on networks of colonists who served under different, sometimes even competing Empires. There is much continuity between the English, Zeelandic and Suriname Company periods. And within the Dutch Atlantic the two tracks of expansion, trade and colonisation existed parallel to each other, and the change between trade and production-oriented colonisation was not clear-cut. The main change that was coming was that the pioneering marchland phase resulted in a potentially successful colony, than needed to consolidate its connection through which it received its credit, labour, military protection and provisions.

¹²¹Schnurmann, ‘Atlantic Commerce and Nieuw Amsterdam/New York Merchants’ cites NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, entry 1.05.10.02 inv.nr. 210; SAA, Notary Hendrik Outgers 9 November 1680, entry 3250, fol. 40; NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, 3 October 1679, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 344.

¹²²Vries, “The Dutch Atlantic Economies.”