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Suriname and the Atlantic World, 1650-1800

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6. Middlemen in the slave trade

The increasing reliance of colonization efforts on enslaved African labour quickly accelerated the integration of the Atlantic world by ties of migration, shipping and finance. This chapter deals with two periods. First, the period that the slave trade was still officially the monopoly of the WIC (for Suriname until 1738). That part focusses especially on the period between the founding of the Suriname Company (1683) until the end of the War of the Spanish Succession (1713). During that specific period Suriname changed decidedly into a plantation colony and its connections to the Atlantic world stabilized. The organization of the slave trade in this early period shows how Paramaribo, with regard to the slave trade, was primarily a shipping point. The slave trade did not yet demand services beyond the supervision over the delivery of human cargo and the securing of payment by the planters. The formal organisation of the WIC in the colony was small; they were represented by one or two commissioners. As long as the shipping connection had not stabilized plantation owners tried to secure the shipping of slaves by the WIC through the making of contracts with the company. The largest contracts were made by Samuel Nassy, whose considerable contracts with the WIC served to reinvigorate the trade when the WIC seemed to be shying away from it. Other private parties were also trying to secure deliveries, although this did not take on a substantial share of the trade, and was abandoned as a strategy once the shipping became more regular.

The second part of this chapter deals with the effect of the liberalization of the slave trade on the connection between Paramaribo and the Dutch Republic. The *negotiatie* bundled capital from a broad range of investors which in turn was used as credit for one or more plantations. This system has received an undeserved bad press for having created an investment bubble and a subsequent credit crisis, which is said to have caused the downfall of many plantations. While it is certainly true that the system failed in the end, the *negotiatie* system did make the expansion of Suriname's plantation production possible. The system was closely connected to the slave trade, which could expand based on the capital available through the system. This chapter argues that the system was created as a response to the liberalization of the slave trade, and was successful in its goal of expanding the plantation economy. The *negotiatie* system increased the importance of Paramaribo for the colony. The centralization of control over plantation production into the hands of fewer and fewer administrators meant that these people often resided in Paramaribo and managed the plantation from there.

In the first decades of the eighteenth century the connection between the plantations and the market in Europe was organised through two or three

types of mediators: two in cases where there was a straightforward relation between a plantation owner in the colony and a commissioner overseas, and often three when the (affluent) owner resided in the Republic and used both a plantation director as well as an administrator to manage multiple properties. Three new actors on opposite sides of the Atlantic came to play a part in the connection between Suriname and the Dutch Republic in the middle decades of the eighteenth century: the *negotiatie* (investment fund) director in the Dutch Republic, in the colony the *agendaris* representing the investment fund (both after 1753) and thirdly a *correspondent* representing private slave trading companies (after 1738). The investment funds were an important new player, pumping a staggering 36.6 million into the plantation economy between 1753 and 1794.⁵⁰⁷ The other new players were the private slave trading companies who came to dominate the slave trade to the colony, with the WIC all but ceasing its slave trading activities to the Americas. These functions often overlapped, and the people holding these positions often chose to reside in Paramaribo to control their portfolios.

6.1. Slave trade before the SC

The inland war had abolished the indigenous slavery and slave trading in the nascent colony in 1686, but the shift to a reliance on importing captive Africans predates this abolition.⁵⁰⁸ The introduction of enslaved Africans into Suriname dates from the 1650s, at the same time when the mother-colony of Barbados made its switch from indentured European labour to African enslaved labour. The recorded transatlantic shipping of slaves to the Suriname River started in 1664 and it is unclear how many arrived before that from Barbados or on ships unregistered by the TASTD. Planters in Barbados adapted sugar technology from Brazil, and spread this to Suriname as well.⁵⁰⁹ Within a matter of decades the full switch was made on the island, pushing other forms of labour to the margins, with the same happening in Suriname.

In the early Atlantic world Amsterdam's slave traders played an important role in generalizing the Iberian practice of slave trading to the North Atlantic system. Not only the Dutch West India Company, but also

⁵⁰⁷ Voort, *De Westindische Plantages*, 265.

⁵⁰⁸ Buve, "Gouverneur Johannes Heinsius"; Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*, 272 The ban on trading slaves with the Amerindians was issued in 1684. Bylaw 122, 16 November 1684, Plakaatboek, 151-152.

⁵⁰⁹ Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 32, 115.

private traders, many with Iberian roots played their part.⁵¹⁰ By the time the Zeelanders had captured Suriname in 1667 the practice had been well established over a period of forty years of WIC slave trading, and the initial moral objections had been done away with.⁵¹¹ The use of enslaved African labour had become ‘business as usual’, although there were still transitional remnants of indigenous enslavement and unfree European *servanten* in the colony.⁵¹² The number of slaves brought to Suriname in the Zeelandic period (1667-1682) was substantial. Between 1668 and 1682 there were four years when more than a thousand slaves were disembarked in the colony, and under the Zeelanders a total of 8,745 arrived in Suriname.⁵¹³ Together with the inland war the departure of the English caused a sharp decline in the number of Amerindian slaves. While there had been 500 in 1671⁵¹⁴ their number fell to 59 in 1684.⁵¹⁵

The willingness of Europeans to invest in plantation production in Suriname is shown by the large shipments of Africans. In the first few years after the Zeelanders took over, many slaves were brought to the colony. The Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674) stopped this, but the shipping was soon revived. During that decade the slave trade on Suriname was primarily organised by the Zeeland chamber of the WIC.⁵¹⁶ Since Zeeland considered the colony as theirs, it is rather likely that there was a sizeable illegal trade in slaves by Zeelandic interlopers. Suze Zijlstra noted about the example of two Zeelandic slave captains, Claes Raes of the ship *Goude Poorte* and Jan Dimmese, captain of the *Seven Gebroeders*, that evading the monopoly of the WIC was common. Their arrival in Suriname was greeted by the colonists as a happy event, and the Governor was not hindering them to do

⁵¹⁰ Catia Antunes and Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, “Amsterdam Merchants in the Slave Trade and African Commerce, 1580s-1670s,” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 9, no. 2 (2012): 3–30.

⁵¹¹ L.R. Priester, “De Nederlandse houding ten aanzien van de slavenhandel en slavernij, 1596-1863: het gedrag van de slavenhandelaren van de Commercie Compagnie van Middelburg in de 18e eeuw” (Commissie Regionale Geschiedbeoefening Zeeland, 1987).

⁵¹² Linde, *Surinaamse suikerheren*, 58.

⁵¹³ TASTD: sum of disembarked slaves under Dutch flag at the destinations Suriname and Paramaribo for period 1668-1682.

⁵¹⁴ Petition from Suriname to the States of Zeeland, 11-Mar-1671, *Zeeuwse Archivalia*.

⁵¹⁵ SvS, *Hoofdgeld en akkergeld 1684* (1684), entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 213.

⁵¹⁶ In the legal trade 6 out of 8 were from Zeeland, the others from Amsterdam and Maze (Rotterdam). There was one interloper, a ship called *Witte Valk*. Data from DANS deposited by Henk den Heijer and Ruud Paesie.

business in the colony.⁵¹⁷ The Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674) cut short the slave deliveries to the colony and in 1672 only few captives arrived, and none at all in the following two years. After the bankruptcy of the first WIC in 1674, the company was relaunched that same year. There is one moment that the WIC suddenly showed great interest in Suriname, when the Dutch contractors temporarily lost their *asiento* with the *asientistas* of the Spanish crown. At that time the idea came up to turn Suriname into a Dutch nodal point for the slave trade into the Americas. However, when the *asiento* contract returned in Dutch hands the plans were abandoned and the number of slaves shipped to Suriname dropped to a low point again in the early 1680s.⁵¹⁸

After Zeeland sold Suriname to the WIC a charter was drawn up, in part to formalise how the colony and the WIC related to each other. Because the WIC had the monopoly and the colony (according to the charter) could not exist without the use of slaves, the WIC was held to deliver 'sufficient' slaves. However, at the time it was not defined how much would be sufficient. Payment for the slaves was generally expected to be done in the form of sugar and could be done in three terms. In case a planter would not be able to pay, there was no need for a court case, but the planter's possessions could be executed. A provisional suspension of payment could only be provided by the colony's Governor after a decision by the directors of the WIC. The charter of 1682 ordered that the WIC could not demand payment for previously sold slaves at once, but had to do so in three terms of 12 months, so as to provide a smooth transition between Zeeland's rule and the new situation.⁵¹⁹ In the period after the transition this was reduced to three terms of six months.⁵²⁰ What remained open for interpretation was the way in which the WIC had to sell its slaves in the colony. As will be discussed later, the WIC was held to public sales of their slaves, so as not to make it difficult for small planters to buy slaves, but at the same time, the WIC by "the sale of the aforementioned Negroes, can demand such

⁵¹⁷ Suze Zijlstra, 'Om te sien of ick een wijf kan krijge, want hebbe deselve seer nootsaeckelijck vandoen' *Migratie, kolonisatie en genderverhoudingen tijdens de Zeeuwse overheersing van Suriname (1667-1682)* (Master thesis at University of Amsterdam 2009) 92-94.

⁵¹⁸ Postma, *The Dutch*, 179.

⁵¹⁹ "maer dat tot gerustheydt van soodanige Coloniers, de welcke tot prompte betalinge onmachtigh zyn, de selve sal gedaen werden in drie termynen; yder van twaelf maenden, en waer van de eerste sal wesen verschenen twaelf maenden na dat de Compagnie in de reëele possessie van de gemelde Colonie sal wesen gekomen." Hartsinck, *Beschryving*, 1770, 2:628.

⁵²⁰ "drie termynen yder van ses maenden, gereguleert na de tydt dat de Suyckeren bequameleyst geleverd konnen werden" *ibid.*, 2:629.

securities as the company will deem necessary for their peace of mind.”⁵²¹ From 1683 onwards the colony of Suriname was ruled by the SC, of which the WIC made up one third. The document of the transition of the colony from the WIC to the SC gave the SC a role in the slave trade. For a three year period the SC was fitting out of slave ships, and was allowed to place their own *supercargo* on board of a slave ship to organise the trade in Africa.

6.2. Personal connections and influential middlemen

During the consolidation of the colony (see Chapter 2), the personal contacts of plantation owners could greatly determine the success of an individual plantation. Most owners were dependent on loans from multiple investors, often relatives or business partners. The preferred way of handling these lines of credit was by giving power of attorney to a prominent colonist. About the European planters and merchants in the early eighteenth century, J.D. Herlein wrote that plantation owners could easily make the plantations profitable, if they had people to supply them with enough credit. Those who had credit with the Company could quickly repay them, after which the planter would be free of debts.⁵²² Those who arrived in the colony without considerable amounts of credit would face great difficulty in making their plantation profitable. Herlein specifically mentions planters who received small amounts of credit from various merchants (*byzondere Koopluiden*). These planters would have to work for many years before they were able to turn a profit, since the Dutch investors had better and safer places to invest and asked high interest rates.⁵²³ At the time, slaves were by far the most costly investment for a new plantation owner. As shown by the estimate given by Herlein of the “costs for making a new plantation” in the early decades of the eighteenth century the buying of 50 slaves is priced at fl 12,500 out of a total cost of fl 23,100. An overview of the changes in slave-ownership in the period 1684-1713 clearly shows that Herlein’s estimate of 50 slaves is reasonable, and from 1704 onwards owners with in between 31 and 70 slaves were most common in the colony – only later in the eighteenth century did sugar and coffee plantations become much. It is unlikely that a planter would buy all 50 labourers at once. Plantations needed quite some preparation before production actually began, often by using a smaller group of workers.

Table 9 Development of slave ownership, 1684-1713

⁵²¹ “dat de selve Compagnie ... sal mogen bedingen sodanige sekerheyt als de selve sal oordelen tot haer gerustheydt dien-aengaende te kunnen strecken.” *ibid*.

⁵²² Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 83.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 84.

	1684*	1694	1704	1713
Owners with slaves <10	95	55	68	107
11 – 30 slaves	41	62	41	66
31 – 70	34	55	86	101
71 – 100	11	5	16	36
>100	2	2	12	11
Total of owners	183	179	223	321

* The 59 enslaved indigenes are not counted.

Source: Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Sociëteit van Suriname, toegang 1.05.03, inv.nr. 213, 227, 232, 241.

If a planter would start with about 50 slaves to work the land, he could repay his debts in less than two years. Planters who started with “6, 8, or 10 Slaves” would have to work much longer before they could profit. Warren writes about these poor whites who had “Plantations” that were “upon Sandy grounds” that they had “no more Servants than themselves.”⁵²⁴ According to Herlein, these were *Kost-Plantagien*⁵²⁵ provisioning the sugar plantations.⁵²⁶ Since starting up a plantation required slaves, and planters were not yet able to buy slaves with sugar, the WIC and the SC agreed that slaves only needed to be paid for in three terms of a year. The time that the WIC allowed for the repaying of slaves fluctuated somewhat during the period depending on their trust in the colony’s development.⁵²⁷ Despite these loans from the company, many transactions that planters were involved in demanded some sort of advance or loan. Since there was generally hardly any cash in the colony, also the provisions bought in the colony were either paid for with sugar, or through bills of exchange, to be cashed in the Republic.

While networks across the Atlantic were often personal or familial, it became very important that the person representing investors or plantation owners in Suriname was powerful and affluent. When in May 1683 Antonio Alvares Machado, an Amsterdam merchant, wanted to buy half of the “plantation or sugar mill” Roode Bank from the Adriana van Blijenborgh the

⁵²⁴ Warren, *An Impartial Description*, 22.

⁵²⁵ The word *kost* can also mean cost, but in this case means food.

⁵²⁶ Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 85.

⁵²⁷ Postma, *The Dutch*, 272–273.

widow and heir of Daniel Fannius, he did this through a merchant in Middelburg.⁵²⁸ One third of his half was paid for by Jacob Pereira.⁵²⁹ Samuel de la Parra was the representative of Antonio Alvares Machado. He would therefore take over the half and divide it over the two interested parties.⁵³⁰ The initial middleman that was instated to manage the plantation is Moses Mendes, a man with no position in the governing of the colony, nor the owner of any land or slaves.⁵³¹ He was quickly replaced by Samuel Nassy.⁵³² It is not surprising that Nassy took over the job from Mendes. Nassy was the first Jewish notary on that side of the Atlantic, and central in the colony's production and shipping.⁵³³ Having a powerful or influential representative reduced transaction costs across the Atlantic. Some planters, such as Johan Scharpenhuijsen and Samuel Nassy moved to the Dutch Republic, and needed someone else to look after their estates. In the case of Nassy he first had a cousin looking after his business sending over goods and recovering debts, but he switched to using the Governor to assist him in recovering his debts.

6.3. Commissioners and Governors

In a situation where a colony was partly governed and policed by planters through the local governing council, there was a clear conflict of interest between taking care of their plantation and policing illicit trade. A related issue was how the slaves should be paid for, since slaves were by far the largest investment.⁵³⁴ The period between 1684 and 1713 sees a series of experiments on the side of the WIC to try out how to deal with Suriname. While the WIC was bound by rules that demanded that they deliver "sufficient" slaves to the colony and also give every plantation owner in the

⁵²⁸ Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Notarieel Archief, 106A/447, Notary D. v.d. Groe, 11-May-1683. The person in Middelburg is Isaac Semach Ferro. Machado wants to pay in terms, and it has to include the 'slaves, black children, female slaves, natives, horses, cattle, kettles, vessels'.

⁵²⁹ Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Notarieel Archief, 4106B/262, Notary D. v.d. Groe, 4-Jun-1683. Together, half the plantation is sold for fl 24,000. The two buyers agree that the third can not be separated from the third, meaning that Antonio has first right to buy the third in case Jacob wants to sell it.

⁵³⁰ Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Notarieel Archief 4107/141, Notary D. v.d. Groe, 16-Jul-1683.

⁵³¹ SvS, *Overgekomen brieven en papieren*, Hoofdgeld en akkergeld 1684, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 213

⁵³² Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Nationaal Archief 4112B/209, Notary D. v.d. Groe, 1-Dec-1684.

⁵³³ J.A Schiltkamp, "Jewish Jurators in Surinam," in *The Jewish Nation in Surinam: Historical Essays*, ed. Robert Cohen, 1982, 59.

⁵³⁴ Herlein, *Beschryvinge*, 84.

colony a fair chance to buy slaves *publyck*,⁵³⁵ it was much safer for them to sell pre-contracted slaves, and only to planters with sufficient credit. Under the rules of the charter the slave trade was so unsuccessful that in 1692 the directors of the WIC discussed completely stopping the shipping of slaves to Suriname, and discontinuing the colonial project in Suriname completely.⁵³⁶ This might have been nothing more than a threat to the plantation owners, but according to Postma the WIC responded to delayed payments by chocking the slave supplies to the colony. The irregular supplies were a great annoyance to Surinamese planters. In 1703 it was suggested by an SC official that the WIC should give up their monopoly to allow private trade. The response from the WIC was that the planters were spoiled, and should not complain since they still had fl 557,566 in debts with the WIC for unpaid slaves.⁵³⁷

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the methods of selling slaves in the colony were either individually, at auction or through a pre-agreed contract.⁵³⁸ Clearly, the first two methods had a downside for the WIC, mainly because payment was delayed and they lacked instruments to enforce the recovery of debts. If a planter defaulted over the course of paying back their debt the WIC suffered a great loss. To deal with the problems on the slave market several methods were tried out, both by the Company as well as the planters, to smoothen the process. The WIC tried to manage their commissioners who could retrieve debts, map out who in the colony were credit worthy, and come to some kind of regulation in the local market. The other method was to sign contracts with planters before a voyage began. These contracts were made by the directors of the WIC with the owners of plantations or their representatives in the Republic. Within the period there seem to be two pivotal years. Firstly in 1695 when there was a great crisis in the relation between the WIC and their commissioners overseas, and they closed a large contract with Samuel Cohen Nassy for the delivery of slaves, circumventing the local market. The other turnaround came in 1707 when relations between the WIC and local government, as well as their commissioners had been normalized, and only the Zeeland chamber of the WIC continued with contracted sales of slaves.

After the SC had taken over the colony, slave shipping was highly volatile. Some years in a row the colony could see the arrival of 3 to 5 ships, and all of a sudden shipping could come to a standstill. The crucial moment

⁵³⁵ Hartsinck, *Beschryving*, 1770, 2:627–628.

⁵³⁶ Postma, *The Dutch*, 182–184.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 273.

for the slave trade lied after the initial exuberance about the colony had faded. As with the Zeelandic take-over of the colony in 1667, the first few years after 1683 were characterized by substantial shipments of slaves. The SC was given a three-year period of closer involvement in the slave trade until 1686, when the WIC took full control of the trade again.⁵³⁹ What is of interest here is a period when no or few slaves arrived, and especially how the trade recovered after that. There are some Atlantic-wide reasons for fluctuations in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, such as intra-European conflicts fought out at sea, or a firm drop in slave supplies due to conflicts in Africa.⁵⁴⁰ While these certainly had their effect on Suriname, the willingness of the WIC to fit out a voyage and supply to the Surinamese planters was another important factor. Contractually the WIC was obliged to deliver ‘sufficient’ slaves to the colonists, but when they were faced with disappointing returns they threatened to stop the supply of slaves and suggested to abandon the colony entirely.⁵⁴¹

The greatest challenge for the WIC in Suriname was that they had to deal with a local government that was not under their control. This was different from the situation in most other Atlantic colonies. On the coast of Africa the position of *oppercommies* (first commissioner) was managing the daily affairs of the major locations under WIC control.⁵⁴² On Curaçao government was “exercised almost always by yes-men of the Company”, with one commissioner responsible for the slave trade.⁵⁴³ Because of the previous control of the States of Zeeland, followed by the take-over of the colony by the Suriname Company, the *commies* of the WIC in Suriname was restricted to manage the affairs of the WIC, which were in turn restricted to the slave trade. The *commies* was to make sure that the arriving slaves were sold publicly in accordance with the charter. The success of the auction was to be guaranteed by the *commies* by spreading news in the colony of the number of slaves that would be sold. The *commies* was also responsible for keeping the administration of the sale, and the debts of the various planters. A *commies* sent over from Europe easily fell victim to the climate and

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 180.

⁵⁴⁰ Heijer, *Goud, Ivoor en Slaven*, 148–151; David Eltis and David Richardson, “Productivity in the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” *Explorations in Economic History* 32 (1995): 465–484.

⁵⁴¹ Postma, *The Dutch*, 183.

⁵⁴² Heijer, *Goud, Ivoor en Slaven*, 76.

⁵⁴³ Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean*, 79.

diseases of the colony, making the recovering of the papers of the previous *commies* a recurring theme for the new appointees.⁵⁴⁴

The instructions for the newly appointed commissioners Marcus Broen and Gideon Bourse from 1687 clearly reveal that the WIC wanted them to keep a check on the local government, who they did not trust. The Governor was asked to support the *commies* in his task; the *commies* on the other hand was ordered to report it if the Governor hindered him in any way. The evasion of the monopoly of the WIC had to be combatted by the *commies* by confiscating the privately traded goods of other WIC employees, or foreign ships trying to sell slaves in the colony. In this the *Heeren X* stressed that the new commissioners had to be vigilant about the Governor, who might be inclined to connive the foreign or other illegal slave deliveries. To insulate the commissioners from the corrupting temptation of private slave trading, they were prohibited from any economic activity in the colony. For their income the first *commies* received fl 1,000 a year, and the second *commies* fl 750.⁵⁴⁵ These are rather large amounts compared to for example that of the Governor of Curaçao in the service of the WIC, which was fl 2,000.

The mistrust of the WIC for the Governors in the service of the SC seems to have been justified. With Governor Aerssen van Sommelsdyck and his successor Johan van Scharpenhuijsen, the WIC had to deal with two men who saw their position as Governor not in the least as a position that gave them extraordinary privileges when it came to the slave trade. From the slave ship *St. Jan* Sommelsdyck only released two thirds to the market, while keeping the other third himself. Sommelsdyck barely received a slap on the wrist for this infringement.⁵⁴⁶ Van Scharpenhuijsen arrived as Governor in the colony not long after the interloper *De Roode Leeuw* had come over from Africa, but Van Scharpenhuijsen remained silent about its arrival in his letters to the SC. This would eventually prove to be a strong argument in the case of the SC against him when he was ordered to come back to the Republic in 1694. By the way they dealt with the interlopers the Governors gave the WIC ample reason to be suspicious of the colony's government. It is therefore unsurprising that the WIC emphasized the need for the *commies* to be vigilant when it came to the actions of the Governor.

While the initial position of the WIC was that the *commies* was to check on the actions of the Governor, they ran into trouble with their commissioner in the following years, reversing the relation between the

⁵⁴⁴ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Instructions for the commissioners of the WIC in Suriname*, 23-Dec-1687, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 68.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Meiden, *Betwist Bestuur*, 51.

WIC, local government and the commissioners. Initially, all seemed to go well. The directors of the Zeeland chamber asked the *commies* to pressure to Governor not to stall return-shipments. Sugar prices were high, making it possible to solve the debts of several planters by sending over sugar as payment.⁵⁴⁷ Gideon Bourse, former commander of Berbice had been appointed second commissioner to Marcus Broen, the secretary of the SC in Suriname. Both were men of high stature, maybe too high for the subservient position of *commies*. When Broen passed away, Bourse naturally took over from him.⁵⁴⁸ Not much later, in 1691, the relation between the Zeeland chamber of the WIC and Bourse went sour. Slave ship *Poelwijck*, destined for the Zeelandic colony Essequibo made a stopover in Suriname. There, Bourse took 16 of the 150 slaves off board, selling them to his sister.⁵⁴⁹ The conflict with Bourse over the slaves, as well as having conducted private business escalated. While the Amsterdam chamber first chose to ignore the issue,⁵⁵⁰ it returned with a vengeance, and in 1692 they cut off payment to Bourse and his second *commies* Peter Sanderus. Not only the issue of private business was put on their plate, also the fact that they rented separate lodging instead of residing in the company warehouse was presented as a major issue. Costs made by the commissioners to build a larger warehouse without having sought the endorsement of the WIC were billed to their private accounts.⁵⁵¹

In the case of the *De Roode Leeuw* of captain Anthonius Tange the authorities neither in the colony, nor in the home port were eager to prosecute. On its return the interloper was let off the hook by the authorities in Vlissingen. This caused great irritation with the West India Company, whose orders were openly ignored.⁵⁵² The commissioners were charged with having to confiscate the goods from these interlopers. The commissioners, who would have to cooperate with the *fiscaal* (bailiff) in these matters,

⁵⁴⁷ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from the WIC chamber Zeeland to Gideon Bourse as commissioner in Suriname*, Middelburg, 16-Aug-1690, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 812.

⁵⁴⁸ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *The meeting of X, Letter from the WIC to their correspondent in Suriname*, 2-Jul-1689, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 68.

⁵⁴⁹ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from the WIC chamber Zeeland to Gideon Bourse as commissioner in Suriname*, Middelburg 8-Oct-1691, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 812.

⁵⁵⁰ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from the WIC to Gideon Bourse in Suriname*, 20-Dec-1691, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 69.

⁵⁵¹ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from the WIC to Gideon Bourse and Pieter Sanderus in Suriname*, 8-Jul-1692, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 69.

⁵⁵² Paesie, *Lorrendrayen op Africa*, 277–278; Heijer, *Goud, Ivoor en Slaven*, 277–278.

would receive a premium for a successful prosecution.⁵⁵³ When the prosecution of the *Roode Leeuw* in the Republic failed, the WIC ordered the commissioners to confiscate all the goods from the ship that had arrived in Suriname, but nothing happened.⁵⁵⁴ The entire slave trade entered troublesome waters. The WIC was angered and replaced Bourse in 1694, but his successors died off in quick succession, leaving them without a reliable representative.⁵⁵⁵ The governing council of Suriname was subsequently asked to take legal action to have Bourse send over his administration and to detain him. But nothing was done about Bourse. What is more, in 1699 he was nominated by inhabitants of the colony to take a seat in the Council for Civil Justice and Bourse served on the council until his term ended in 1703.

Both the Bourse and Van Scharpenhuijsen affairs caused a change in the relation between the WIC, SC and the colony. The newly appointed Governor, Paul van der Veen, was an outsider without any financial interests in plantations or shipping. The WIC officially received jurisdiction over the colony's Governor, who was ordered to "execute WIC orders as long as they do not infringe on the interests of the SC as a whole."⁵⁵⁶ While Governors were treated with suspicion in the first decade of Suriname Company ownership of the colony, they became the pillar of support for the WIC during the tenure of Paul van der Veen.⁵⁵⁷ The Governor was also to play a role in the retrieving of the debts of the colony's planters. Van der Veen became a central figure in supplying information about the colony to the WIC. The letters from 1700 and 1701 give general information about the ships in the area, about the size of the leaving convoys and what the WIC can expect in terms of goods arriving in the Netherlands on their account.⁵⁵⁸ The correspondence with the commissioners turned to discussions about the solvency of planters and to inform them about the pre-agreed contracts for the slaves that will arrive in the colony, continuing rather uneventfully until 1706. Thus, due to the crisis of 1694/5 with the commissioners, the WIC was

⁵⁵³ *Instructions for the commissioners of the WIC in Suriname.*

⁵⁵⁴ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from the WIC to Gideon Bourse and Pieter Sanderus in Suriname*, 20-Dec-1691, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 69.

⁵⁵⁵ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from the WIC to Governor and Council in Suriname*, 9-Sep-1694, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 69.

⁵⁵⁶ "de bevelen van de W.I.C moest opvolgen voor zover die niet strijdig waren met de belangen van de Sociëteit als geheel" Meiden, *Betwist Bestuur*, 67.

⁵⁵⁷ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from the WIC to Governor Paul van der Veen in Suriname*, 4-Oct-1697, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 69.

⁵⁵⁸ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from Paramaribo to the West India Company about the slave trade*, 13-Oct-1700, entry 1.05.01.02, inv.nr 1282.

able to change the governing of Suriname to a way similar to its other Atlantic outposts. Instead of only dealing through a subservient commissioner, they acquired a direct relation to the colony's Governor.

By 1707 the slave trade had continued rather steadily for quite some years, with ships arriving every year, and annual disembarkations generally between 500 and 1500 slaves. The *Heeren X* came to trust the stability of the colony, and let go of the bitterness they had voiced about the indebtedness of the planters. The *commies* was reminded that he was lower in rank than the Governor and council, and that he was not authorized to extend justice in criminal cases, but had to follow the judgement of the local council. The *commies'* payment went up to fl 1,200 and that of the second *commies* was raised to fl 1,000. Furthermore, he became allowed to have some land to build a house, and he was given the freedom to invest fl 2,000 in the building of a *Negerije* (place to keep slaves). Relations between the WIC and the colony's government normalized to an extent that the commissioner was now only there to organize auctions and tour the colony to recover debts.⁵⁵⁹

6.4. Contracted sales

One way to secure delivery, sale and payment for slaves was to establish a contract between plantation owners and the WIC. Until now very few examples of contracts between plantation owners and the West India Company for the delivery of slaves to Suriname have been discussed in the literature.⁵⁶⁰ This paragraph gives an overview of several contracts found in the archive of the Zeeland Chamber of the WIC and the Notarial Archive in Amsterdam.⁵⁶¹ After the initial enthusiasm of investors that had been caused by the founding of the SC died down, the colony started to stagnate in the 1690s. The number of slaves was declining between 1693 and 1696, and the number of Europeans in the colony was hardly growing either.

Table 10 Population figure of the colony based on the poll tax, 1693-1697

	Whites	Enslaved
1693	319	4756
1694	352	4691
1695	379	4614
1696	463	4697
1697	447	4915

Source: SvS, Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren, May to December 1699, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 227.

⁵⁵⁹ Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from the X to Commies Cornelis Denijs in Suriname*, 3-Dec-1707, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 70.

⁵⁶⁰ Postma, *The Dutch*, 272–274; Heijer, *Goud, Ivoor en Slaven*, 339; Reesse, *De suikerhandel van Amsterdam*, 210–211.

⁵⁶¹ NL-HaNA, Archief van de Tweede WIC, toegang 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 812 and many thanks to Catia Antunes for the use of her database of notarial contracts.

The WIC was in a crisis with its commissioners: first the troubles deposing Gideon Bourse, followed by the death of several successors. The prominent planters and the political council started a lobby to motivate the WIC to start shipping slaves again. In September 1695 Herman van Hagen, member of the council in Suriname, came to the meeting of the directors of the SC to discuss the developments in the colony. Hagen delivered the message that the larger planters in the colony wanted to contract the WIC for the delivery of 20,000 slaves to be paid cash. For the less affluent planters there should also be deliveries which were to be sold, in accordance with the charter, on public auction. Hagen wanted the directors of the SC to assist in convincing the WIC to organise this,⁵⁶² but such a contract was never made. In October of that same year Nassy, however, made a contract that on four different ships a total of 500 slaves would be sent to him.⁵⁶³ The contract of the WIC directors with Nassy was a clear sign that larger planters were forcing the WIC to become more dependable in its deliveries to the colony. It was also a way out for the WIC who did not have to depend on local commissioners and poor planters, but could now outsource the reselling of the slaves to one of the richest men in the colony.⁵⁶⁴ While even Nassy could not have any use for such a great number of slaves, it saved the WIC quite some headaches over payment. This was in a period when only very few plantations had more than a hundred slaves. This changed considerably due to the imports in the period. Between 1694 and 1704 the number of plantations with over a hundred slaves rose from two (one was Nassy's), to twelve.

In 1684 Samuel Nassy was very enthusiastic about the new possibilities now that the colony was in the hands of the SC. He proposed to the directors of the Suriname Company to organize a shipment of slaves to the colony. His freight price would be fl 55 per slave and he had also offered to organise the return-shipment of the *Sara*, without the directors having to spend anything on the warehouses.⁵⁶⁵ The directors answered that they did not see how the SC could benefit from this arrangement, and above all, that the WIC would not allow for the SC to make contracts with private persons

⁵⁶² SvS, *Resoluties directeuren, 1690-1695*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 20.

⁵⁶³ Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Notarieel Archief, 4774 act unknown, Notary S. Pelgrom, 26-Oct-1695.

⁵⁶⁴ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 69, *Letter from the WIC to commissioners Gerbrand van Sandick and Nicolaas Houtcoper in Suriname* 25-Nov-1695.

⁵⁶⁵ SvS, *Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren, 16-Nov-1683 - 20-Nov-1684*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 212.

to trade on the coast of Africa.⁵⁶⁶ In this case, Nassy had overplayed his hand. But private initiatives outside the WIC played an important role in motivating the WIC to continue the slave trade in the consolidation of the colony.

In the late 1680s the WIC started to close deals with individual planters to organise their shipments. A small portion of a shipload would be on contract, the rest could still be sold at auction.⁵⁶⁷ The first contract seems to date from 1688 and was made by the WIC with Abraham Pinto da Fonseca, Pedro Garcia and Isaac Lopes Salsedo to deliver slaves in Suriname to them from the ship *Coromantijn*.⁵⁶⁸ A later, but similar contract stated that the directors of the WIC Ferdinand van Collen and Hendrick van Baerle closed a contract with Daniel Fruijtier, Thobias Amsincq, Thobias van Hoornbeeck and Cornelis Denis en Zoon for the delivery of slaves to Suriname. The contract would mention the ship, in this case *Pijnenburg* with captain Abraham Schepmoes, and that it would be sent to the coast of Africa to buy 400 slaves to be brought to Suriname. To the contractors a total of 32 slaves would be sold for a price of fl 210 per slave.⁵⁶⁹ The size of these contracted portions of a ship remained relatively low. In 1705, ten years after the arrival of the *Pijnenburg*, the *Christina* disembarked 421 slaves: 34 were sold on contract, 110 were sold individually, and the other 273 on the auction block.⁵⁷⁰

Nassy's contract with the WIC was an important contract made with a number of representatives of the WIC.⁵⁷¹ The ordinary contracts that consigned slaves to specific people were not signed across multiple WIC chambers, but were organized by the chamber fitting out the voyage. Nassy's contract was communicated to the WIC commissioners in Suriname who needed to follow its execution strictly by seeing to it that Nassy received the

⁵⁶⁶ SvS, *Brieven van de directeuren naar Suriname, 1683-1687*, entry 1.05.03 inv.nr. 90.

⁵⁶⁷ NL-HaNA, Tweede West-Indische Compagnie, *Letter from the WIC to commissioners Gerbrand van Sandick and Marcus Glimmer in Suriname*, 9-Sep- 1694, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 69.

⁵⁶⁸ SAA, Notarieel Archief, 4772 act 532, Notary S. Pelgrom, 17-Sept-1688.

⁵⁶⁹ SAA, Notarieel Archief, 4773 act 530, Notary S. Pelgrom, 13-Aug-1694.

⁵⁷⁰ Postma, *The Dutch*, 274.

⁵⁷¹ In Nassy's contract 'Mr. Ferdinand van Collen en Jacob Scott, raden etc. in Amsterdam, Abraham Biscop, heer van Serooskerke etc., Hugo 's Gravesande, burgemeester van Delft, Nicolaas Wijntgis, schepen te Hoorn, Reijnt Lewe, heer van Middelstum, allen bewindhebbers der WIC' make a contract regarding the supplying of 500 slaves to Suriname. They wil outfit 4 ships which will each supply 125 slaves. The slaves will be bought in Angola, and will be sold for fl 210 each.

first 125 slaves of every *armasoen* that arrived.⁵⁷² Having first choice of a shipload of slaves was of course a major privilege, normally not even allowed to the colony's Governor. After taking the shipments of slaves, Nassy then resold the slaves to planters in the colony.⁵⁷³ This specific kind of contract was unusual, and might only have been organised once. It was more common for the WIC to make contracts with a few planters who would buy the enslaved for their own use on their estates.

J.D. Herlein discussed the method of contracting small numbers of slaves to specific planters to explain the irregular arrival of ships: Herlein wrote that "the WIC hardly ship any slaves before fl 100 is paid in advance in Holland." He blames the slow speed at which people sign up as a reason why slave ships take so long to arrive in Suriname. The contracts made before notaries in Amsterdam or those that were mentioned in the correspondence with the Zeeland Chamber of the WIC do not mention that fl 100 should be paid in advance. However, it seems likely that this had been common practice, given the nature of the problem that the WIC tried to fix with these contracts. There seems to have been some marked differences between the contracting of slaves to planters between Amsterdam and Zeeland. The WIC directors making contracts in Amsterdam did so in batches. Larger groups of people were on the same act signing up for slaves to be delivered to their colonial counterparts. The Zeelandic contracts were made up of smaller numbers of people, and generally with fewer counterparts. Only a few big players made contracts. These same names also are found in requests asking for preferential treatment when sailing their freighters to the colony to get sugar as a return shipment. Given the scattered nature of much of the source material it is unclear whether contracting stopped entirely, but no evidence of later contracts has been found. During the phase of consolidation of the colony, contracts helped the WIC gain some measure of financial security while offering plantation owners the possibility of gaining preferential treatment by the company.

⁵⁷² *Letter from the WIC to commissioners Gerbrand van Sandick and Nicolaas Houtcoper in Suriname.*

⁵⁷³ For example, he sold 50 slaves to Anna Maria van Hulten for only fl 9,000 (fl 180 per slave, well below the set price of fl 210). SAA, Notarieel Archief, 4773 act 282, Notary S. Pelgrom, 4-Dec-1692.

Table 11 WIC slave trade contracts, 1688-1712

Year	Average number of slaves consigned per planter or investor (Amsterdam)	Number of contracted owners or investors (Amsterdam)	Average number of slaves consigned per contract (Zeeland)	Number of contracts per year (Zeeland)
1688		3		
1689			6	1
1690				
1691		1		
1692	12	4		
1693				
1694	8	4	5	2
1695	13	10	9.33	3
1696	6	5	10.25	4
1697	11.05	20		
1698				
1699				
1700			18	3
1701	6.3	27	10.6	3
1702	7.3	12		
1703				
1704	8.3	30		
1705	6.8	20		
1706	8.3	46	8	3
1707	5.3	12		
1708			12	1
1709				
1710				
1711			12	1
1712				

Source: Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Archief van de Tweede WIC, entry 1.05.01.02 inv.nr. 812 and Antunes Database of Amsterdam Notarial Contracts.

6.5. Financial innovation after 1738

In the WIC-trade period problems with payment for slaves were constant, and they continued in the free trade period. There were two main problems: either the plantations did not have credit in the Netherlands because of bad business results of that plantation, or the merchants and bankers simply did

not have the money to pay out the bills of exchange that were sent to them by the planters. There were credit crises in 1706, 1721 and in the early 1730s.⁵⁷⁴ The crisis of 1763 after the Seven Years War was felt in Suriname and also in 1768 middlemen received many bills of exchange that had been protested in the Republic. The best-known of these type of crises was in 1773 when investment funds stopped paying out bills of exchange from their plantation managers. The need to pay for the slaves brought in from Africa was a main reason for the planters to require good lines of credit in the Netherlands. The primary concern for private slave trading companies was therefore the payment for the slaves that they brought to Paramaribo. Because of the recurring problems with the bills of exchange the surest forms of payment were return-goods like sugar and coffee.

The history of innovations in the credit system can be traced to the 1730s. The end of the 1730s saw increasing political conflicts about the organisation of the bills of exchange rising to such a level that the Governor disbanded one of the governing councils. Difficulties with the solvency of planters were not new and not just restricted to the large sums they owed to the WIC. At the end of the 1730s there was a fierce debate on the 25 per cent fine placed on bills of exchange that returned protested, because the number of bills that returned was extremely high, effectively causing a 25 per cent increase on many transactions.⁵⁷⁵ In 1736 a bylaw was passed to protect planters against usurers that would lure them into mortgages or other arrangements. Such schemes were disallowed from amounting to more than 8 per cent interest.⁵⁷⁶ The other returning issue was the protesting of bills off exchange. The local government often received uncovered bills as payment by the planters for the strengthening of the defences.⁵⁷⁷ The bills of exchange were a sensitive issue, since the lack of credit in the colony pushed planters to use these bills as a method of payment within the colony as well. When the price of coffee dropped this immediately curtailed the means of the planters to repay their debts, and in 1737 the creditors and debtors convened to discuss a *surcéance* of payment, sanctioned by Suriname's local government. This was to prevent that the properties would be executed and the colony ruined. Of course, those who were then given a break in their obligations to their creditors were forced to make all of their produce available to repay "domestic and foreign."⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁴ Postma, *The Dutch*, 273.

⁵⁷⁵ Bylaw 376, 10/11-Feb-1738 and was revoked on 12-Dec-1739, *Plakaatboek*, 443-444.

⁵⁷⁶ Bylaw 359, 25-Jan-1736, *Plakaatboek*, 421.

⁵⁷⁷ Bylaw 372, 5-Feb-1737, *Plakaatboek*, 439.

⁵⁷⁸ "in en uytlandsche crediteuren" Bylaw 374, 26-Jul-1737, *Plakaatboek*, 440-442.

Once the slave trade to Suriname was opened to private traders after 1738, the planters had an increased need for credit at a time when the solvency of many planters was already bad due to the low prices of plantation products. Before the liberalization of the trade the WIC would appoint in rotation one of its chambers to organise a slaving mission. When the slave trade proceeded under the strict monopoly of the WIC, the company controlled all the legal slave ships that were to be outfitted to Africa. The *Heeren X* would decide on the route, the chamber of the WIC would arrange for a ship, captain and trade goods in the period between the institution of the second WIC in 1674 until the company opened the trade in three phases in 1730, 1734 and finally for the Guianas in 1738.⁵⁷⁹ For Suriname, the great change in the supplying of slaves came in 1738. From then on the WIC only levied a “recognition fee”, a tax that served to acknowledge the WIC’s formal monopoly over the trade, and provided income to the company. Smaller companies took over the trade, and the shipping of slaves to the colony increased. The MCC was the largest private slave trader, with 114 slaving voyages of which about 70 went to Suriname. They were followed by Van Coopstad & Rochussen from Rotterdam with 50 to Suriname out of their 65 in total.⁵⁸⁰ Jan Swart and his son participated in 63 voyages, of which 46 were destined to Suriname. Adriaan Kroef was the smallest of the big free traders with 27 shipments of slaves to Suriname.⁵⁸¹

The liberalisation of the slave trade meant that planters could no longer spread payment for their slaves over an extended period of time, as had been the case with the WIC and the way payment had been organised under the *octrooy*. Rather, their debts were now with private traders who were hungry for either plantation products that they could sell in Amsterdam, or good bills of exchange drawn on people in the Republic. Planters were in need of new methods to pay for slaves, especially because the expansion of the cultivated land in those years meant that those slaves who were put to work on the plantation would work on the expansion of the plantation infrastructure and clearing new land, rather than producing goods that could be used to pay the slave traders.

To solve the planters’ credit problem that built up during the 1740s, in 1751 an Amsterdam banker set up a *negotiatie*, an investment fund for West Indian plantations. This first *negotiatie* bought up the planter’s debts and mortgaged the plantations. The *negotiatie* system developed in tandem with the expanding debts of the planters, which were then bought up by

⁵⁷⁹ Postma, *The Dutch*, 128, 134–136, 150; Heijer, *Goud, Ivoor en Slaven*, 337.

⁵⁸⁰ Ineke de Groot-Teunissen, “Herman van Coopstad en Isaac Jacobus Rochussen. Twee Rotterdamse slavenhandelaren in de achttiende eeuw,” *Rotterdams Jaarboekje* (2005): 171.

⁵⁸¹ TASTD.

Willem Gideon Deutz in the initial *negotiatie*. The *negotiaties* can be seen as the unintended consequence of a decade of liberalized slave trade. It is somewhat uncertain who were extending credit to the planters in the period before the *negotiatie*.⁵⁸² There are numerous bills of exchange in the Amsterdam notarial archives suggesting that families were extending credit, or at least accepting bills drawn by their kin overseas. It is certain that the WIC carried some of the burden, and there were some Amsterdam merchants extending loans and mortgages to planters in the colony.

According to W.W. van der Meulen there were three types of *negotiatie*. First the ones started by Deutz which freely bought up debts from planters, and extended credit. This approach was cut short by increasing problems with the mortgages, which gave rise to a second group of funds, which were more cautious, and where supervision became more direct and controlling. The funds wanted direct knowledge of the state of the property. These were mostly from before 1780. The third group identified by van der Meulen signalled the return of a mortgaging system. The colony was in a less critical state, funds managed to get some of their invested money back, and the risks for investors were spread across a wider range of plantations.⁵⁸³

Before the liberalization of the slave trade, the planters had not yet been constrained by the *negotiatie*. A good example is the MCC shipping on the colony before it engaged in the slave trade. In their attempt to enter the market for return goods, they found it difficult to get between the planters and their commissioners in Amsterdam to whom planters sent their goods.⁵⁸⁴ As shown by van Prooijen, the MCC functioned both as shipping company and as merchant in this connection. In the less chartered waters of Spanish America they only worked as merchant since they were still expanding into that trade, rather than relying on consolidated connections. To trade in Suriname, the MCC captains would bring cash to buy the sugar, rather than trading with a *cargasoen* of finished products.⁵⁸⁵ Despite their failure to do so there appears to have been at least some space for planters to decide who they wanted to ship their goods with, and to whom, even if this was not to Middelburg and the MCC. Van der Voort claims that the MCC traders were forced to accept that they were barely shipping goods between 1750 and

⁵⁸² Voort, *De Westindische Plantages*, 86 There are numerous bills of exchange in the Amsterdam notarial archives suggesting that family were extending credit, or at least accepting bills drawn by they kin overseas. .

⁵⁸³ W.W. Meulen, "Beschrijving van eenige Westindische-plantageleeningen: bijdrage tot de kennis der geldbelegging in de achttiende eeuw," *Bijdragen en mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 25 (1904): 490–580.

⁵⁸⁴ ZA, MCC, Letters from Neale to the MCC directors

⁵⁸⁵ Reinders Folmer - Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*, 129, 136.

1773 as a direct effect of the *negotiatie* system.⁵⁸⁶ It can be added that they already had problems finding returns for the slave ships before the *negotiatie* system, during the first decade of the free-trade era. Slavers sailing the triangular trade had actually been loading small returns for decades, albeit on a less pronounced scale than during the liberalized trade.

In the years after the privatization of the slave trade, the number of slaves that were brought to Suriname per year increased from about six hundred slaves shipped into Suriname in 1740 to more than three and a half thousand in 1745.⁵⁸⁷ By that time so many slaves were arriving in the colony that not all of them were sold, and were shipped out again. Liberalisation of the slave trade greatly impacted trade and shipping to and from the colonies, including commodity shipping. Under the free trade, the routes of the slave ships changed. Slaving companies were free to arrange their voyage, although the high level of expertise required to organize such a voyage makes it likely that there was a close connection between the monopoly and the liberal system. WIC slavers had been accustomed to sail straight to either Elmina or outposts on the Loango coast.⁵⁸⁸ The free traders bought captive Africans all along the coast and took much longer to do so than slavers who went straight to the assembly points on the coast; in fact they spent twice as much time.⁵⁸⁹ WIC ships mostly just had one primary destination in the Americas where they would disembark slaves before commencing the return voyage.⁵⁹⁰ The free traders made up for their lost time by spending much less time in the Americas before they would sail back. Free traders were more eager to leave a colony if they found the price of slaves to be too low, in contrast to the WIC monopoly trade when they were free to set the price (which was both lower and more stable than during the liberalized trade). Postma wrote that there were 36 ships that had been reported to stop at Suriname only to sail onwards. If we also include the ships that sold 10 per cent of their cargo or less, than there were 60 out of 466 incoming ships that left Paramaribo without selling a significant portion of their human cargo in the period between 1740 and 1779 alone.

The mobility of the liberalized slave trade shortened the average waiting times in Paramaribo. The other change was the greater inability or unwillingness to assemble a return shipment for the voyage to the Republic. Also for the WIC the assembly of a return shipment was not deemed very

⁵⁸⁶ Voort, *De Westindische Plantages*, 65.

⁵⁸⁷ PSDC: 1740: 602 arrived, and 602 sold. 1745: 3997 arrived and 3602 sold.

⁵⁸⁸ Postma, *The Dutch*, 151.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

important but they spent far more effort than for example the ships of the MCC to get cargo.⁵⁹¹ The question is if this reflected the free traders' preference, or if they were forced to except bills of exchange rather than plantation products as payment. When the MCC was struggling to gain a foothold in the slave trade in the 1740s and 1750s 83 per cent of a returning slaver's value on board was in the form of bills of exchange.⁵⁹² It seems rather unlikely that the MCC happily accepted this, but rather used this as a method to make buying slaves from them more favourable for the planters. When the directors of the MCC made a contract with "owners, interested planters, and commissioners of plantations in the colony of Surinam" for the delivery of slaves, they tried to make provisions that would encourage those with whom they made the contract to consign freight for the return voyage within six weeks after arrival. The MCC could not load the sugar and coffee as payment for the slaves, but still tried to persuade the planters to load something on board their ship. The ship would then sail back to Holland or Zeeland. If it sailed to Zeeland the MCC would even pay for the transport of the goods to Amsterdam.⁵⁹³

That the slave trade was integrated into the credit relation between the colony and the Republic was of course not new, and neither was the way in which this circuit of trade further complicated the principal-agent problem in the connection. The WIC commissioners who were overseeing the slave trade around the turn of the eighteenth century were already disallowed from having any interest in the plantation economy exactly because such a combination of interests could easily trigger fraud or market manipulation to the detriment of the slave trading company.⁵⁹⁴ With the onset of the liberalized slave trade this complication was transported to the private sector and became more directly entangled with the relation between the plantations and the Dutch companies. Despite the many discussions about the workings of the plantation-system, the change that took place following the privatisation of the slave trade is often treated somewhat peripheral, since it chronologically preceded the founding of the first *negotiatie*.

After consolidation of the colony and liberalisation of the slave trade the number of different kinds of middlemen that were active in the process of connecting the European markets and the Surinamese plantations increased. At the same time the parallel connections of the various plantations to owners and investors across the Atlantic were concentrated

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 171–172.

⁵⁹² Reinders Folmer - Van Prooijen, *Van goederenhandel naar slavenhandel*.

⁵⁹³ MCC, Stukken betreffende de slavenhandel, inv.nr. 1567.2.

⁵⁹⁴ See chapter 3.

into the hands of fewer people. Before this change had taken place many individual planters connected to individual commissioners (often their relatives) in the Republic. The new middlemen took on a larger share of the communication than those who were active at the time when there were more individual relations and connections. The third group that came to play a role were the representatives of the private slave trading companies. The overseas representatives of the slave trading companies were often the same individuals as the administrators of the overseas owners, greatly increasing their ability to manipulate their principals in the Republic as well as the managers on the plantations. By playing a role in the slave trade they combined two seemingly opposing interests: slave-trading companies were interested in high prices for slaves, while the representatives of absentee plantation owners should safeguard low prices for plantation labour. The slave trading companies were also interested in selling to planters with good credit who were able to pay quickly, while plantation administrators might have been prone to get slaves to the plantations even if its owners were unable to secure direct payment.

6.6. Centralization of management

The onset of the *negotiatie* system resulted in the increase of production in the colony. Johannes Postma argued that the credit schemes made the rapid expansion of the number of slaves in the colony possible.⁵⁹⁵ During the era of the liberalized slave trade and the *negotiatie* system the colony's production boomed due to the large numbers of imported slaves. The enslaved population grew from about 23 thousand to around 60 thousand between the 1740s and the 1770s. Also, the number of vessels arriving in Suriname increased rapidly. In 1740 2 slavers and 42 bilateral freighters departed from Paramaribo after having sold their cargo. In 1769 this had grown to 19 slavers and 71 freighters. Especially coffee production boomed. In 1740 more than eighteen million pounds of sugar and five million pounds of coffee were shipped out. In 1769 sugar export stood at the still respectable amount of almost seventeen million pounds, while coffee production had grown so much that fourteen million pounds of coffee were exported from Suriname to the Dutch Republic that year. Despite a credit crunch and the surfacing insolvency of many plantations as well as declining slave disembarkations in the following decade, production remained high and in 1779 there were still sixteen million pounds of sugar and more than twelve million pounds of coffee exported aboard Dutch ships. The decades of steady growth, followed by the production boom, saw such an immense amount of interest from Dutch shipping companies trying to acquire return

⁵⁹⁵ Postma, *The Dutch*, 214.

shipments that the actual load per ship dropped from the 1720s to the late 1760s, only to start rising again after the credit crunch had dissuaded companies from fitting out an excessive amount of freighters to the colony.⁵⁹⁶

This great increase in productivity raised the stakes for those involved, although it seems that especially middlemen profited from the system rather than the investors and owners themselves. The way plantations were managed, especially after the beginning of the *negotiatie* system, was very lucrative for managers and middlemen, but not so much for the owners of the plantations. The administrators and *negotiatie* directors gained from an increase in turnover, rather than from efficient and profitable management. The *negotiatie* demanded planters to ship the goods to them directly, instead of using their produce as payment. The private slave traders were therefore forced to accept bills of exchange. With this came the need to have someone in the colony to assess the credit of the planters they sold the slaves to, a *correspondent*. This person had to be well connected in the colony, and so these jobs converged into the hands of a small number of well-connected people.

An important figure in the transition from a system in which the WIC advanced most payment for slaves to the liberalization of the slave trade and subsequently to the *negotiatie* system of providing credit to plantation owners was Adriaan Gootenaar. He was not only a middleman representing slave traders; he also managed a large number of plantations, and later became a lobbyist who attempted to re-start the flow of credit once it slowed down. This multiplicity of roles makes him a good vantage point to discuss the changes that took place during the rapid growth of the colony, the onset of the *negotiatie* system and its relation to the slave trade. Gootenaar's career from slave trade representative to plantation manager is exemplary of the central role of the liberalization of the slave trade in the changing relationship between the Suriname and the Dutch Republic.

Gootenaar was born in 1736 in Delft and moved to Suriname in 1757 on board the ship *Groenegijn* from Amsterdam. In the colony he married Elisabeth Petronella Dahlberg in 1769. He spent most of his career in Suriname, passing away at the age of 50 in 1786 in Paramaribo and was buried on his plantation *Nieuwe Star*. Gootenaar had seen all steps of the process of first increasing and later collapsing credit during his time in the colony. He had represented large investment funds, slave trading companies and presided over civil court cases leading to the execution of defaulting planters. He also managed plantations, and was familiar with all aspects of running them. A telling example of his detailed and wide ranging knowledge

⁵⁹⁶ See Appendix 1.

is that when the MCC wanted advice on how to retrieve slaves from particular ships in case the buyers in the colony defaulted, Gootenaar advised them on what variations of brandishing irons could be used for this. Having such intricate knowledge, he engaged several times in advising both local government and directors overseas about migration, credit and other issues concerning the colony. As a central figure in the colony he also participated in the planter's literary society.

Gootenaar was one of the early representatives for *negotiaties* but during the boom years of the system a new breed of middlemen arrived in Paramaribo. The development of the *negotiatie* system made it easier for outsiders to invest smaller as well as larger sums in the Surinamese plantations economy. The amount of available credit rose quickly, faster in fact than the plantation-economy could expand. The *agendaris* came in to represent such funds overseas by finding plantations to invest in and as a result started to extend credit in the form of mortgages to willing planters. In return the mortgaged planters were obliged to ship their products to the representative of the investment fund in the Republic, and the proceeds of bringing the goods to market would be used to pay the shareholders. When the plantations turned out to be insolvent and unable to repay their debts many were declared bankrupt, and again bought up by an ever smaller number of funds, quickly concentrating ownership of the plantations. While owners had a direct interest in the plantation and its management, the investment fund rather had an interest in both the payment of interest, the selling of the plantation products and the provisions from supplying the plantations. Oostindie summarized the change as the "connecting of loans, consignment systems and bonds."⁵⁹⁷ The smaller commissioners and traders in Amsterdam who were unable to secure a connection to a plantation through a *negotiatie* in the years after 1750 were pushed out of the connection.⁵⁹⁸

Initially those who managed the plantations had a pioneering position, they were autonomous in many of their business decisions, and investors in the Dutch Republic lagged so far behind in terms of information and understanding of what was going on that they had very little say over the daily running of the plantations. This relationship between the managers in the colony and the Republic changed drastically over the course of the eighteenth century. Due to the high credit demands of the liberalized slave trade, investors gained a large say over the businesses in the colony. During the first decades of the eighteenth century the connection was mostly one of rather straight forward representation: the planter or even merchant-planter

⁵⁹⁷ Oostindie, *Roosenburg*, 341–342.

⁵⁹⁸ Voort, *De Westindische Plantages*, 65, 80.

needed a representative in the Republic, and investors or repatriated owners wanted to be represented in the colony. All planters starting and developing a plantation would both need credit or cash to invest in their plantation and a merchant-correspondent in the Republic who would bring their sugar to market. The proceeds of those sales would be added to a *rekening* of the planter in the Republic. This account could be used to buy provisions to be shipped to the colony, to draw bills of exchange that could function as a method of payment in the colony, or the other options would be to reinvest or save it for a later date. Whatever was the case, the planter in the colony had a large say over what would happen with the account.

People such as Samuel Cohen Nassy, Stephanus Laurentius Neale, and the family Van Sandick moved back to the Dutch Republic once their business in the colony could support it.⁵⁹⁹ With the departure to the Republic came the issue of overseas representation. A rich and influential planter like Neale could use the acting Governor as his representative in the colony.⁶⁰⁰ This was no small business, in fact, Governor Mauricius stipend for his post as Governor was fl 9,000 while he made an additional fl 5,000 from the plantations he managed.⁶⁰¹ The eighteenth century saw the decline of the number of resident-planters (people who both owned and oversaw a plantation) in the colony. In a random trial by Van Stipriaan for the middle of the eighteenth century he found that between 20 and 25 per cent of the plantations did not have their owner reside in the colony. This figure rose to about two thirds absent owners in the 1790s.⁶⁰² The position of the administrator vis-à-vis the owners is well illustrated by the large share of the net incomes from a plantation that they could keep for themselves. The net proceeds from sales of plantation goods in Amsterdam were only four times larger than the income generated from administering that same plantation.⁶⁰³ The administrators made such a formidable amount by taking a 10 per cent provision of all the goods produced by a plantation, as well as from the supply of daily provisions, such as regional imports.⁶⁰⁴ The literature

⁵⁹⁹ See previous chapters. The family van Sandick is discussed in the plantation biography of Roosenburg and Mon Bijou by Oostindie who goes into great detail to disentangle this changing relationship between owners and managers of the plantations. For such families a possible first step before moving to the Republic was to let their children study there.

⁶⁰⁰ Gülcher, "Een Surinaamsche koffieplanter."

⁶⁰¹ Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 36 writes that the proceeds from the management of Neale's plantations was 10.000, but the source for this is unclear. In Van der Meiden, *Betwist bestuur*, 101, 158 it says it was fl 5.000 for all the administrations together.

⁶⁰² Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 293–294.

⁶⁰³ Oostindie, *Roosenburg*, 330–331.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 329.

discusses how the relation changed for the worse with the onset of the *negotiatie*. The so-called *agendarissen* were a new generation of administrators. In the literature of the day there was a sense of moral panic about the sudden availability of credit through these people.⁶⁰⁵ P.F. Roos complained bitterly about the detrimental effect such managers had on the day to day practice of planters.⁶⁰⁶

What followed was the complete collapse of the autonomy of the plantation director, both with respects to their expenditure, as well as to their freedom of movement. The power of the administrators could be such that they would disallow planters to leave the plantation unless they had received formal permission from the administrator in town.⁶⁰⁷ Financially the planter, who was becoming more of an overseer than anything else, was completely dependent on the administrator in the city. Administrators became like Dukes ruling over a number of estates, trying to prevent any direct communication between the managers of those estates and the principals in the Dutch Republic. Planters in the hinterland relied greatly on contacts in the city who provided them with nearly everything they needed. From regionally imported goods to products from the Republic, much of it was distributed by people in the city. For example the plantation manager J.G. Dolre greatly depended on what was sent to him by the administrator P. Berkhoff and others in the city, who in turn depended on what arrived from overseas. If supplies were limited this immediately caused shortages. P. Berkhoff and G.V. Kermans sent him bulk goods he needed like flagstones, a barrel of tar, but also goods for personal consumption like cheese, drink and new clothes as well as food and supplies for the slaves such as mackerel and tobacco. The administrators kept Dolre up to date with the requests from the proprietors in the Republic, and demanded regular updates to the plantation accounts. They also restricted Dolre in his actions. He was reprimanded for lending tools to other plantations, or digging a ditch without their permission.⁶⁰⁸

The rather limited connections to the outside world – depending on one or two administrators in town – were typical for the Surinamese system of management from the credit boom (1765-1773) onward. The high provisions of the administrators made them benefiting partners in both

⁶⁰⁵ Nassy et al., *Essai historique*, 137–138 Describes the sudden arrival of agents in the city after the crisis of the mid-1760s: “dans chaque rue de Paramaribo on ne trouvoit que de agens munis de procurations pour offrir au premier venant de l’argent à credit’ . .

⁶⁰⁶ P.F. Roos, *Redevoering over de oorzaaken van ’t verval en middelen tot herstel der Volksplanting van Suriname* (Amsterdam: Hendrik Gartman, 1784).

⁶⁰⁷ Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 288.

⁶⁰⁸ HCA, 30/749.

production as well as consumption. Alex van Stipriaan argued that the uneasiness of the administrators with any direct communication between planters and owners was due to the strict hierarchical nature of colonial society.⁶⁰⁹ However, the suggestion by Oostindie and Beeldsnijder based on the case of the administrators Van der Meij and Gootenaar suggest that this was principally to prevent the owners from uncovering special arrangements between the investment fund director and the administrator,⁶¹⁰ or of course fraudulent operations of the administrators. Gootenaar himself argued against systems of attorneys he was involved in, writing that someone who owns one plantation, and is also administrator of another, will make more profit on the one he owns himself. This was not because he would be more careful with his own plantation, but because he knows all “lost corners” where he can do something, and experiment more freely with improvements. On top of that, added Gootenaar, the administrator’s 10 per cent is of great cost to the absent owners.⁶¹¹

It was not the first time that such a problem arose in Suriname. The paragraph on the commissioners discussed how the WIC attempted to solve the problem by introducing a second *commies*. When this did not work to their satisfaction they cultivated the relation with the Governor, balancing these two agents to prevent too much information asymmetry. In the case of the administrators and the investment funds the mistrust between the owners and the investment fund formed a complicating factor. The initial solution to the problem was to appoint more than one administrator.⁶¹² From the trade oriented nodal point Curaçao, came a letter by the MCC correspondent Pieter Kock Jansz, who made a comprehensive list about the partner he needed for his business. He needed a partner because “we should always take into account the morality of man.” This partner should be affluent, married without a prenuptial agreement, not an *assurandeur*, not an *armateur* who ships for his own account, banks or vessels.⁶¹³

But having two administrators was no definite solution, and could cause new problems, as van Stipriaan discussed in his study. Administrators would both try to pressure the plantation director to further their interests, and would on occasion replace the planter without the knowledge of the

⁶⁰⁹ Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 286.

⁶¹⁰ Oostindie, *Roosenburg*, 378–379; Beeldsnijder, “*Om werk van jullie te hebben*,” 16:96.

⁶¹¹ MCC, *Response op het Project*, entry 20 inv.nr. 1567.2.

⁶¹² Oostindie, *Roosenburg*, 323.

⁶¹³ MCC, *Pieter Kock Jansz, Letter from Pieter Kock Jansz. on Curaçao to the MCC Directors in Middelburg* (20 July 1762), entry 20 inv.nr. 56.6.

other administrator, let alone the overseas owners or investors.⁶¹⁴ The other problem was that having two administrators was far from a good way to prevent those administrators to look after their personal interest rather than those of the principals overseas. In fact, the administrators that Oostindie cites as a duo who shortly managed the Van Sandick plantations were Steenberg and Saffin, two men who managed their business in tandem in a large number of other occasions. While the administering by two different people could work for a period of time, its use declined over time, especially when the urban elite of administrators became divided into blocks. Marten Schalkwijk has argued that at the end of the eighteenth century there were “distinct groups with strong mutual business interests and not only a dispersed network of mistrust relations.”⁶¹⁵ The period in which there was more credit available through the *negotiatie* was not just a short ripple, but lasted longer and had more impact than the duration of the credit boom might suggest. During these years the colony changed, not only due to the massive influx of slaves, but also because of the way the connection between plantation and motherland acquired more levels of centralised management.

What is striking in the overview of bills of exchange for the MCC (see Appendix 3) is that the system used for the bills of exchange was much more complicated than the regular pattern in which there only was a drawer, bearer and drawee. The bills of exchange handled by the Middelburg Trading Company had several people involved in them. First there was a drawer (also referred to as payor) who wrote out the bill. This would often be a plantation manager buying slaves. This plantation manager ordered the drawee (the drawer’s business partner in the Netherlands) to give money to the company who had sold the slaves (the bearer or payee), which was represented by the *correspondent*. The bill would be taken to the directors of the MCC, or at least to a correspondent in Amsterdam where most of the drawees were stationed. In this way the plantation manager did not have to have cash, but could ensure the person he bought the slaves from that he would be paid once the bearer of the bill arrived back in the Netherlands. The drawee had a direct relation with the plantation manager. In most cases the plantation manager or drawer was obliged to send his plantation products to the drawee in the Netherlands. The profit made off the sale of these plantation products would be written down as credit out of which the bills of exchange could be paid once the representative of the Middelburg Trading Company arrived. However, it could be that the drawee would not accept the

⁶¹⁴ Stipriaan, *Surinaams contrast*, 287.

⁶¹⁵ J. Marten W. Schalkwijk, “Colonial State-Formation in Caribbean Plantation Societies. Structural Analysis and Changing Elite Networks in Suriname, 1650-1920” (Cornell University, 1994), 158–164.

bill because the drawee did not have the funds, the plantation manager did not have credit with the drawee or had failed to send over enough plantation products. If the transaction went right, the drawee would accept the bill, and be called acceptor from then on. If the bill was not accepted, the holder had to go back to the drawer. In Suriname there was a heavy fine for the drawer if his bill did not get accepted in the Netherlands. He would have to write a new bill of exchange including a 25 per cent fine on the amount on the original bill. On these transactions the *correspondent* was also accustomed to take a percentage, to be added to their account with the slave trading company in the Republic.

The bills for the trade on Suriname had an extra party involved since the bill were often drawn under *ordre* of the administrator under whom the drawer served, or someone who had received procuration from the drawee. The bills could either be drawn by private persons, or by people who were acting *in qualiteit*. This was indicated by writing *qq* behind a name, meaning that the person had procuration and was not handling his own property. This was often differentiated from those same people also managing properties *in privé*, for their own account. Most bills of exchanged used by plantation managers in 1763 (before the great leap in investments through the *negotiatie*) to pay the MCC were not drawn on investment funds but directly on the owners.⁶¹⁶ This changed quickly. Already in 1765 the investment funds have come to be an important source for credit to pay the MCC. These bills reveal the multiple connections, as well as the overlapping roles that many of the middlemen played.

Few of the names in the network of drawers and drawees will be unfamiliar to those studying the Surinamese plantation economy at the time (see Appendix 3 on page 240), either as director, administrator, owner or investment fund director. Among the drawers a figure like D. van der Meij stands out.⁶¹⁷ He can be seen in the list of bills both as a drawer on different drawees in the Republic, but also plays a role as administrator for others. Another, not uncommon occurrence was that someone would draw a bill with himself as the overseeing administrator, as can be seen in the case of D.F. Dandiran. He drew two bills in quality together with H. Overman, with himself as the administrator.

The middlemen representing the holder of the bills (the MCC) in this case were the brothers Saffin. They did many of the same jobs as Gootenaar,

⁶¹⁶ Only the Marselis brothers were drawn upon. The others were owners or relatives of the drawer's plantation. Van der Voort, *Westindische plantages*, 269-323. Bills of exchange destined to the company see appendix 5.

⁶¹⁷ He is discussed in the study by Oostindie as the administrator for the Van Sandick family. Here he can be seen as playing many roles in the system of administration and procuration.

and worked together on several occasions. The Saffins were an important node between various individuals. They also shortly served the Van Sandick family, but for some reason (according to Oostindie it was unclear why) they stopped representing the family after only a short period of time. It does not seem that they committed any blatant fraud, but their short-lived role as *correspondent* for the MCC might give a clue as to why they did not serve very long. The MCC directors wrote to Gootenaar that they wanted to switch from the Saffins to him simply because they heard from the captain of one of their ships that the Saffins were far too busy with all their jobs to properly take care of the interests of the company. Saffin & Company was expressly found to manage the business of the Middelburg Trade Company. Hans Saffin and Steenberch already had a company together, and so did Frans Saffin and Adriaan Gootenaar. The brothers Hans and Frans Saffin had however never combined their businesses before.⁶¹⁸ Once they combined their activities to serve the MCC they dealt with the selling of slaves, mostly advising the slave captains and handling the debts that planters had with the MCC. Besides handling the bills for the MCC in this case, they also were the ones acting as administrator for the slave buyers John MacNeil under the *negotiatie* Van der Poll, Paul Wentworth under the Marselis *negotiatie*, A. Nepveu under the Hamilton & Mijnders *negotiatie* and were also representing Isaak Harbanel and David Lemak Hoab for the buyer A. H. Arrias. The Saffins, Gootenaar and the other representatives of slave trading companies, absent owners, and investment funds show that while these businesses might formally have been separate enterprises in the Republic (although not always as seen in the case of Coopstad & Rochussen) the representatives in the colony often combined all the seemingly contradictory roles, including holding a position in local government.

Compared to the period before the big wave of *negotiatie* credit, production in the colony was high. Geopolitical problems and the outbreak of the wars – from the North American War for Independence to the end of the Napoleonic wars – caused considerable turmoil in the following decades. While great schemes to centralize plantation management in the hands of a large scale investment project failed, the years of the credit crunch did result in a centralization of ownership and management in the colony. The big players, such as Marselis and van der Poll got their hands on many plantations, and the number of middlemen with overlapping interests increased tremendously. An administrator like Wolff was able to have 57

⁶¹⁸ MCC, Letters from Saffin and Company to the MCC (27 January 1763), entry 20 inv.nr. 54.1.

businesses under his partial supervision in 1795.⁶¹⁹ As we shall see in Part III, the centralization of management by investment funds was not enough to guarantee the Dutch privileged access to their colony. Despite all the investments by the Dutch, the British and North Americans would come to take over the crucial trade and shipping connections, even the slave trade.

⁶¹⁹ Marten Schalkwijk, *Colonial State-Formation in Caribbean Plantation Societies. Structural Analysis and Changing Elite Networks in Suriname, 1650-1920* (dissertation Cornell University 1994) 158-159.