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Suriname and the Atlantic World, 1650-1800

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Cover Page



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Part I: Integration, 1650-1738

The first part of this book demonstrates how the movement of experienced colonists across imperial boundaries provided the colonial project in Suriname with the networks that saved it from being overrun by indigenous assailants or starved due to lack of supplies. The first three chapters are chronologically ordered, and focus primarily on the importance of intercolonial connections during the founding of the colony. It argues that during this period Suriname increasingly integrated in the Atlantic world and that its economic ties to the Dutch Republic became stronger as well.

As discussed in the introduction, shipping is an important measure used in this study. The shipping between Suriname and the Dutch Republic changed from a Zeelandic to an Amsterdam affair. The increasing availability of cargo in Paramaribo ensured that sugar planters had to compete on the quality of their wares for captains to be willing to load their produce on board. Despite the unfavourable results of the War of the Spanish Succession for the Dutch, and especially for Suriname, the increased production in the colony made the Surinamese plantation owners become an influential group that self-consciously started to negotiate the terms and conditions under which the colony was governed. In this period the slave trade became more stable, and planters could increasingly count on regular deliveries of enslaved Africans to the colony.

Even though the slave trade is intertwined with the integration period, it is discussed in greater detail in chapter 6. The change from a centrally organised slave trade under the five chambers of the WIC to a situation in which private companies started to supply enslaved Africans to the colony after 1738 is taken as this part's end. The liberalization of the slave trade contributed much to the changing of the relationship between Paramaribo and the Dutch Republic. Because Paramaribo became more intensively connected to Africa, Europe and North America, the period until the late 1730s is one of increased Atlantic integration.